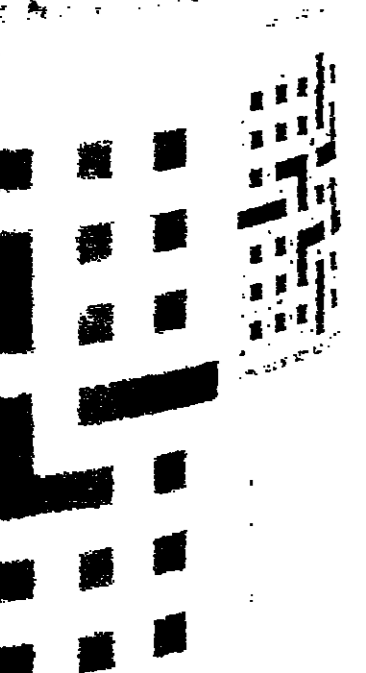


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Wednesday March 27 1996

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Australia AU 20	Israel NIS 20	Saudi Arabia R 10
Austria S 13.50	Italy L 2,000	South Africa R 10
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Benin CFA 195.00	Korea ₩ 100	Sweden S 10
Bhutan Nu 10.00	Kuwait KD 1.00	Switzerland SF 3
Botswana P 1.00	Latvia L 2.00	Taiwan NT 100
Brazil R 200.00	Lebanon L 2,000	Tanzania T 1,000
Canada C 1.00	Lithuania L 2.00	Turkey TL 100,000
Cayman Islands KYD 20.00	Luxembourg F 25	Ukraine U 2.00
Chad CFA 195.00	Madagascar M 200	USA US 2.75
China RMB 8.00	Malawi M 200	Zimbabwe Z\$ 20
Cyprus C 1.00	Malaysia M 2.00	
Czechia Kc 16.00	Mexico M 20.00	
Denmark D 8.00	Morocco M 20.00	
Egypt E 1.00	Netherlands G 4.00	
Finland F 11.00	Norway N 15	
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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

46,511

Guide to Oscar night

I'd like to thank...

G2 with European weather



Our fear of the single life

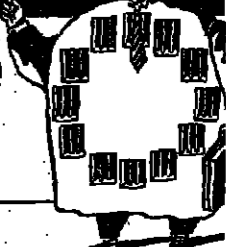
Home alone

G2 cover story

The future of the EU

Europe: more or less?

Turin summit preview page 10



Police chiefs want anti-terror squad to spy on green activists

Move urged as frustration grows over anti-roads campaigners

Christopher Elliott and Duncan Campbell

ANTI-terrorist squad chiefs are to be asked to gather intelligence on Newbury bypass protesters and other environmental activists under a plan put forward by senior officers in England and Wales.

Commander John Grieve, the head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch currently involved in investigat-

ing the latest wave of IRA bombings, would co-ordinate intelligence.

Senior officers in the fight against terrorism were scathing last night. One said: "These people should be dealt with as a public order issue. What are we talking about here most of the time? Criminal damage? It's a public relations disaster."

The move follows a period of increasing frustration for chief constables over the anti-roads campaign, which has

held up work at sites around the country.

Supporters of the move suggest that many of the people involved in the animal liberation movement are also engaged in the anti-roads protest and it would make sense to have a nationally based system of gathering intelligence.

About a year ago the Association of Chief Police Officers embarked on a pilot study on "environmental extremism". After major confrontations in Thames Valley and Hampshire, it was concluded that a co-ordinated response was needed.

The change was recom-

mended by the Acpo committee on terrorism on January 24.

The proposal, to be debated by Acpo on April 10, states: "The chief constables' council is asked to endorse the decision of Acpo council committee on terrorism and allied matters to extend the role of the national co-ordinator to include the investigation of all aspects of terrorism and co-ordination of environmental inquiries at the invitation of chief constables."

Police sources stressed that the co-ordinating function was aimed at the "top of the scale" activists rather than demonstrators or people who

climbed trees. They were interested in violent protest rather than "people sitting down in the middle of the road which is a public order issue".

"Nothing should be read into the fact that John Grieve is the head of the anti-terrorist branch," a police source said. "It's just that he has the infrastructure to deal with it."

Commander Grieve, who has just returned from Ireland, was not available for comment.

One of the groups that would undoubtedly come under the scrutiny of the Yard, if the plan were to be accepted, is the "Donga" tribe, whose members form a

core of activists in the anti-roads legions. Since the Dongas inaugurated anti-road direct action protest at Twyford Down near Winchester in 1992 their members have become a common sight, active at dozens of protests including Wanstead, Bathaston, Follock and Preston.

Green activists have accumulated skills which mirror the success of the cruise missiles protesters, whose trailing of the missiles around the lanes of East Anglia proved a painful thorn in the side of the Ministry of Defence.

The great lobby has refined its tactics in the anti-roads crusade over the past few

years and come up with a campaign at Newbury which will put millions of pounds on the outline cost of building the bypass.

Their campaign has not only caused serious delay to the road building project but infuriated local MPs.

Of the dozens of arrests during the past few weeks, however, none has been of a very serious nature.

As the head of the anti-terrorist branch, Commander Grieve is responsible for co-ordinating the response to any terrorist incident in the country. He has also been given the responsibility for international terrorism.



Major set for cattle cull U-turn

Michael White and Stephen Bates in Brussels

FORMIDABLE alliance of British farmers, public opinion, and the European Union last night pushed John Major's cabinet into disorderly retreat over its refusal to restore world-wide confidence in the beef industry by sanctioning the slaughter of herds infected with BSE.

With ministers and officials still working frantically to establish what measures would be sufficient to win repeal of the EU worldwide ban — due to be confirmed today — and how much Brussels would contribute to the huge compensation costs, Whitehall was still refusing to confirm the imminent U-turn.

Bitter exchanges with Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown at Prime Minister's question time left MPs in little doubt that Mr Major still believes scientific advice does not justify a mass culling of the herd on public health grounds.

But he now expects to be forced into it by what he angrily called the need to "restore confidence in the market because of ill-conceived comments and ignorance of science".

In Brussels, a confrontation loomed between the Government and its 14 European partners four days before the start of the EU's crucial inter-governmental conference (IGC) in Turin, which irate Tory MPs will now expect to be dominated by the realities of the beef crisis, not theoretical blueprints for Europe's future government.

Yesterday the National Farmers' Union called for the culling of older cattle to restore confidence in beef — which took a further batter-

'There is a need to restore confidence in the market because of ill-conceived comments and ignorance of science'

The Prime Minister

ing with the announcement by Bird's Eye that it was halting production of beefburgers because of the crisis.

In what is now a straight political fight, with the scientific evidence left far behind, there was little European sympathy for the Government and its minority attitude towards the EU. It leaves the Prime Minister desperately short of allies just when he faces paying between £350 and £800 compensation for every culled cow — up to 800,000 even on the restricted terms being discussed.

At Westminster the NFU's president, David Nash, circulated the Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders, and ministers, to garner support. With the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorritt, quoting a Sun editorial that "it is the public that is mad, not the cows," tempers frayed. The Labour leader, Mr Blair, accused ministers of "mind-boggling incompetence" and Mr Major stung out Mr Dorritt's shadow, Harry Harman, for "undermining" a key industry.

Yesterday EU veterinary experts confirmed their recommendation that British beef should be banned worldwide for the second day running, which the European Commission will ratify today. The decision — which left UK officials "very disappointed" — came after a day of administrative confusion and acrimony over Monday night's premature announcement by Franz Fischler, the Austrian agriculture commissioner, that the move had already been agreed.

The ban was temporarily blocked by the two British commissioners, Sir Leon Brittan and Neil Kinnock, pending a fuller consideration of the scientific evidence and legal advice on whether a worldwide ban is lawful.

To the rage of Euro-sceptical Tories, who questioned its legality, the commission maintained yesterday that it is empowered to prevent British beef being exported to third countries in case it is then re-exported back into the EU. That amounts to imposing a worldwide ban, though the point may be academic because few markets now remain open to British beef.

Following Monday's 14 to 1 vote in favour of the ban, the veterinary experts from all 15 member states reconvened for a second day yesterday, at John Major's request, to hear Sir Kenneth Calman, the chief medical officer, chief veterinary officer, Keith Meldrum, and Professor John Patison, head of the expert committee looking into BSE, give additional scientific evidence. "Naturally I am very disappointed," Mr Meldrum said later.

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The Queen is applauded by the Polish president, Aleksander Kwasniewski, after her address to the parliament in Warsaw PHOTOGRAPH: FAWEL NODPCZYNSKI

Gaffe mars Queen's visit

Madeline Bunting and Sanchia Berg in Warsaw

ROYAL officials were forced to admit another embarrassing blunder when the Queen delivered the wrong speech to the Polish parliament yesterday and omitted a crucial paragraph commemorating the suffering of the Polish Jews in the second world war.

The visit is increasingly being seen as accident-prone after last-minute alterations had to be made to the Queen's itinerary last week following criticism from prominent British Jews that she would not be laying a wreath at Auschwitz in memory of Holocaust victims.

The Queen failed to include in her keynote

address: "Nor can we ever forget the suffering of the Polish people under Nazi occupation, nor the terrible fate of the Polish Jews."

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said last night that the omission was "entirely unintentional" and due to a "typographical error" which had not been properly checked. "It was purely a mistake, for which the Queen's advisers take full responsibility."

On Monday, the Queen visited the Umschlagplatz Jewish memorial in Warsaw for a hastily arranged wreath-laying ceremony in memory of Holocaust victims, after talks between Buckingham Palace and the Foreign Office on Friday.

Yesterday's slip will fuel disappointment that, unlike most visiting heads of state, the Queen did not

visit Auschwitz. The Board of Deputies of British Jews had expressed its disappointment. The Queen is to visit Krakow today, only 40 minutes away, but Buckingham Palace insisted the schedule is very tight.

The insensitivity on the Jewish issue has marred an otherwise warm reception for the Queen, whose speech yesterday was greeted with two standing ovations by Poland's political leaders — one prompted by her quoting four words in Polish from a 1980s protest song which became the motto of Solidarity.

She warned that Britain would not allow Russia to veto Poland's entry into the European Union and Nato. Later, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh took tea with Lech Walesa, the former Polish president.

RSPCA rocked as Charity Commissioners order curbing of animal cruelty campaigns

John Keeble

THE RSPCA has been thrown into turmoil by a Charity Commissioners ruling that will force it to tone down many of its campaigns against cruelty to animals.

It has been told that it must stop campaigning against activities which are considered

to have a benefit for mankind. In such cases, it can only fight for the welfare of the affected animals. The ruling is a boon for blood sports and landowning interests.

"This is absolutely devastating," said one RSPCA insider. "The whole basis of our work to protect animals will have to change to simple welfare."

Angela Walder, a member of the RSPCA's ruling council, commented last night: "The situation is incomprehensible. We've got little old ladies all round the country giving us money from their pensions to fight for animals — they aren't going to understand this quango saying we can't do it. To hell with the Charity Commissioners."

The ruling on charity law is contained in a letter by Richard Pries, the Chief Charity Commissioner, and has been confirmed by legal counsel instructed by the society.

In his letter, Mr Pries says the RSPCA would be acting "in a way inconsistent with its charitable status" if it "asserted that the infliction of pain on animals could not be

justified, even in circumstances in which it confers a higher benefit upon mankind".

Christopher McCall QC, instructed by the RSPCA to review the commissioners' ruling, was even blunter in his assessment of the law on campaigning for animals by charities. "Charity must serve the overriding object of

the public benefit. That is to be measured in terms of the benefit to mankind."

The ban presents a fundamental obstacle to campaigning, say members of the RSPCA's ruling council, but they have told the commissioners they will toe the line. Ron Kirby, chairman of the council, said yesterday: "As a Turn to page 3, column 7

Advertisement

"I was all at sea till I found out about Ruskin College"

John Prescott

When I was a very young seaman, like many I had missed the chance of full-time further education. Then I heard about Ruskin College.

Founded in 1899 Ruskin was the first residential college for working people and for those who had little or no educational opportunity when young.

Every autumn since then, men and women have arrived at the college from a variety of communities, ethnic, industrial and trade union backgrounds, to study full-time for the first time in their adult lives.

They will leave with formal qualifications and go on, to further study, or return home to pursue their careers. Few have any recognised educational qualifications when they arrive.

All have a common interest in society and a desire to improve it. Entry to Ruskin is by interview and is only for students who are 20 and over.

The college is residential and full state bursaries are available.

If like me you are motivated to improve society this is your opportunity to gain the education you always wanted - but missed. Think of where it could get you!

Send for a prospectus now or ring 01885 310713.

Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford, OX1 2HE. Ruskin College is a charity which exists to provide education for adults.

Inside

Britain
 Two High Court judges have voiced concern over the withdrawal of welfare benefits from most asylum seeking immigrants

World News
 The IMF is about to approve a \$10.2 billion credit facility for Russia to boost Yeltsin's re-election hopes

City
 A record-breaking £4 billion payment to Brussels helped push Britain's balance of payments deeper into the red

Sport
 The era of the English cricket supremacy ended and the game will go back to a system discarded 12 months ago

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Sketch

Mad world of beef encounters



Simon Hoggart

JOHN MAJOR revealed the Government's new confidence-boosting slogan yesterday: "Eat British Beef - you probably won't die..."

ing to the very end. BSE, he said, was not a party political crisis, but a crisis for the whole nation. Labour should stop making cheap party political points.

Leaked memos show oil company jeopardised Turkish city's drinking water over 30-year period

Shell 'polluted water supply'

Paul Brown, and Chris Nuttall in Ankara

SHELL has been pumping contaminated water from oilfields into the aquifer that supplies drinking water to 2 million people in Turkey.

documents. Greenpeace yesterday described Shell's activities as "a specific case of systematic pollution."

Turkey were told the city's water supply would become contaminated in 30 years and would remain so for between 100 and 300 years.



Dr Fay received a reply saying there was no economic case for recovering the oil. He said: "It should be made quite clear that we need to take the utmost care to ensure that economics alone do not distract us from ensuring that all steps have been taken to safeguard the environment."

the problem and, by the end of 1995, 50 per cent of the waste water was being safely disposed of. By 1997, all the water would have been injected back into the Mardin oil strata under the scheme.

First night

Disco diva's blast from the past

Caroline Sullivan

Donna Summer

MOST former disco divas are notorious for nothing more than the girth of their wigs. Donna Summer, however, engendered lasting controversy 10 years ago when she announced that Aids was divine retribution against homosexuals.

made the most of it, glittery songs like hers demand more chrome-plating in the stage-set department.



'Crazy though it seems, the real winner of the Oscars is not Scotland but the Irish economy'



Mel Gibson, top left, with two Braveheart Oscars and, above, leading a charge in a scene from the film

Scotland waits to trade on Oscar's bounty

Oscars

- Best Picture: Braveheart
Best Actor: Nicolas Cage
Best Actress: Julia Roberts
Best Supporting Actor: Kevin Spacey
Best Supporting Actress: Mira Sorvino
Best Director: Mel Gibson
Best Screenplay: William Goldman
Best Adapted Screenplay: Michael Ondaatje
Best Animated Short Film: A Close Shave

Edward Pilkington

AS HOLLYWOOD nursed its morning-after hangover yesterday, the British leisure industry was only just beginning to celebrate the bounties expected to flow from the Academy Awards.

There was only one hitch to such triumphalism. Braveheart was filmed largely in Ireland, which offered generous tax subsidies and free use of the army for battle scenes.

and is planning a publicity campaign in the United States on the back of Emma Thompson's Oscar for her screenplay of Sense and Sensibility.

Neal Scanlan, who won an Oscar for visual effects for making with his north London company, the Creature Shop, some of the talking pigs in Babe, said in Los Angeles: "Business has been slow for the past few years, but now it's really taking off."

spin-offs for firms making and hiring clothes. Tim Angel, who runs the world's largest costume hire company, Angels & Bermans in London, provided outfits for three Oscar-winning movies.

Australian backpacker murder trial opens

Christopher Zimm in Sydney

THE trial of Australia's alleged backpacker killer began here yesterday, with claims he may not have acted alone.

The first body found was that of Welsh tourist Joanne Walker. Her English friend Caroline Clarke, 21, was found with 10 bullet wounds to the head. Milat has pleaded not guilty to murdering the two British women, Germans Ms Hahschmid, Gaber Neugebauer and Simone Schmidt, all 21, and Australians James Gibson and Deborah Everist, both 19, between late 1988 and 1992.

Judges voice concern at asylum benefits cut

Alan Travis Home Affairs Editor

TWO High Court judges yesterday voiced concern that the withdrawal of benefits from most asylum seekers would have "drastic and unwelcome consequences" despite upholding the Government's decision as strictly legal.

the court that it had seen more than 400 asylum seekers who faced destitution and homelessness as a result of the decision. Many were sleeping on friends' floors or in emergency shelters.

not ultra vires the judges said the methods chosen might have the consequence that some refugees who had legitimate claims under the asylum laws might be placed "in a penurious or perilous condition" while seeking to assert their rights in this country.

Eurostar advertisement for Brussels featuring a cartoon character and text: 'BRUSSELS Le Mamekin Pils. 400 different beers. Europe's Capital of Art Nouveau. 100 Years of Cartoons at the Comic Strip Museum. And chocolates. Go to the centre on Eurostar from £69 return. 0345 881 881'

erve boosts fitness

Students grants ov

Supply

Nerve study boosts Gulf illness fight

Chris Millill and Melanie McFadyean

GULF War veterans with unexplained illnesses are suffering from a form of nerve damage, research published today will show.

Although the cause is still unclear, it is possible a combination of anti-nerve gas drugs may have been responsible. The findings of a Glasgow neurologist, to be published in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, show the nervous systems of 14 veterans had clear differences to those of 13 healthy civilians.

The research comes as an American scientist is arguing that chemical agents damaged the immune systems of soldiers in the Gulf, making them vulnerable to side-effects of the polio vaccine they were given.

The studies will assist veterans campaigning to have their illness recognised by the Ministry of Defence.

The UK research was carried out by Goran Jamal, of the Institute of Neurological Sciences, at the Southern General hospital, in Glasgow. The veteran and civilian groups were tested on their ability to hear sound impulses, to assess damage to the central nervous system.

The results show there were significant differences between the two populations — the Gulf War veterans versus the control population — in terms of nervous system function. The Gulf War veterans performed less well, Dr Jamal told *Frontline* Scotland. BBC Scotland's programme to be screened tonight.

The TV programme did not identify a possible cause of the damage, but Dr Jamal said the "NAPS" nerve gas agent given to thousands of soldiers could be an important factor. French soldiers not issued with NAPS tablets have had no health problems. In the programme, several veterans recall how they were

given a cocktail of 17 injections against diseases like plague — and tablets designed to protect them from biological and nerve gas attack — all within a few days.

"One of the problems is we research these substances in isolation," said Dr Jamal, an Iraqi Kurd. "What we don't know is the combined effect, of for instance NAPS combined with other compounds, and I think it is underestimated."

Veterans speak bitterly in the programme of the legacy of ill-health that they have suffered since serving in the Gulf.

Some recall how they reported feeling unwell shortly after the injections — only to be given a paracetamol tablet, in some cases by army doctors feeling equally as sick.

Bob Anderson, from Methilhill, Fife, who served 22 years in the army, says he used to be fit and active, but now cannot hold down a job. He has chronic back pain, muscle spasms, constant colds, tiredness, lethargy, behavioural problems, tension, and insomnia.

The US work has been carried out by Howard Urnovitz, a research microbiologist from the company, Calypso Biomedical, in Berkeley, California, who compared 134 Gulf veterans with 345 civilians.

He says the troops were given oral polio vaccine, but failed to create the antibodies (defence cells) the vaccine normally makes, leaving them open to infection, particularly the post-viral fatigue which had been a common Gulf veterans suffer.

"The important aspect of these results is that they show the immune systems of the veterans were damaged. We know that from the absence of antibodies to the oral polio vaccine. That absence is probably due to contact with chemical agents."

The theory has been backed by Jim Tuite, former director of the US Senate investigation into Gulf War syndrome, which found toxic fumes and possibly organo-phosphate agents, like the nerve gas Sarin, could have reacted with the polio vaccine to damage the immune system.



Sunday afternoon drinking in an 1897 gin palace. Below, advertisement aimed at younger market for gin, the favourite tipple of Sir Denis Thatcher

In praise of gin

When he buys his ties, he has to ask if gin will make them run

By Scott Fitzgerald
The Last Tycoon

No man is genuinely happy, married, who has to drink worse gin than he used to drink when he was single

By H L Mencken
Reflections on Monogamy

'How much gin did you put in the jug?'
'A liberal tumblerful, sir.'
'Would that be the normal dose for an adult defeatist, do you think?'

By P G Wodehouse
Right Ho, Jeeves

'Little nips of whisky, little drops of gin,
Make a lady wonder where on earth she's bin'

Anon

Tonic for Sir Denis as grovelling Gordon's apologises

Furore over marketing memo ends in firm coughing up cases of mother's ruin for Thatcher book launch, reports John Mullin

John Mullin

EVERYBODY was happy: Carol Thatcher had some lovely publicity for her latest book: Sir Denis had a few bottles of his favourite tipple secured; and even United Distillers came out of it smelling of flowers. Juniper, in fact. Only the poor soul who mucked up had anything to worry about.

The unnamed marketing chap had penned a memorandum to his boss, Steve Boland, ridiculing an audacious proposal from Ms Thatcher. She thought it a wheeze to ask United Distillers to supply bottles of Gordon's, the nation's favourite gin, for her book launch next month. Below The Parapet, Ms Thatcher's

hagiography of her father, ridiculed the idea that he was the gin-sozzled old bore depicted in Private Eye's Dear Bill letters.

With Gordon's turning to late-night advertising featuring a muscled young man improbably sliding down a swizzle stick into its alcoholic beverage in an effort to seduce younger drinkers, the marketing man felt an association with Sir Denis was a bed idea. "This would take us back to the dark ages."

Senior executives apologised to Britain's first First Gentleman after the memo was leaked. Gordon's, which sells 1.2 million of the 2.9 million cases of gin bought in Britain every year, would be delighted to help out at the book launch. Lynette Royle, public af-



fairs director at United Distillers, explained: "We do a lot of work for charity."

Quite why the publishers, HarperCollins, were unable to cough up for a few bottles of mother's ruin remained a mystery. Below The Parapet claims Sir De-

nis, a millionaire through his own industry, was far from a drunken duffer. The image was, apparently, a cunning plan to convince the nation he never interfered behind closed doors.

Ms Royle had to cancel a luncheon engagement to deal with the furore. Such applications usually go through on the nod. "What appears to have happened is that it was assessed for its relevance to a marketing strategy. We are trying to aim for the younger market, but we know we ignore at our peril those who are over 30. I'm one myself."

Ms Thatcher said it was perfectly correct for Gordon's to stomp up a few cases. "Denis has done a lot for the image of gin. He drinks it at the age of 80 still at a very admirable rate." But, lest other companies wished to join in supplying the publishing jamboree, she distanced him from any one brand. "He drinks whatever gin his beloved wife brings him back from the duty free shops."

For all this, Sir Denis has to thank Francisco Sylvius, a physician from Holland. More than 300 years ago, he mixed pure spirit alcohol with juniper berries and distilled the mixture for medicinal purposes.

English mercenaries in the Thirty Years War called it their Dutch courage.

When William of Orange (Protestant) became king and banned the import of French (Catholic) brandy, the gin craze became an epidemic. At its mid-18th century peak, when Hogarth drew Gin Lane's gutter-strewn, debauched mothers, one London house in five was said to be a gin shop. Sir Robert Walpole, one-time Home Secretary, called it "one of life's only earthly pleasures."

It became popular in India. The accompanying tonic had quinine to ward off malaria. Gin became more sophisticated, aided by price hikes. One move to impose duty had sparked rioting across Britain.

Many have fallen foul of gin-induced alcoholism. Take Geoffrey, for example. He took three months to be weaned away from his foul mood. He lived for another 15 years after kicking the habit. He was a donkey.

Students back grants overhaul

Gary Young and Kate Connolly

STUDENTS last night abandoned their long-standing campaign for full funding through a system of grants after a passionate debate at their annual conference in Blackpool.

The Blairite wing of the National Union of Students argued successfully for a new system of funding which would rely on a mixture of support from taxpayers, businesses and a fairer system of student loans. It won the first key vote by a comfortable majority after a debate described on both sides as a "battle for the soul of the union."

"This is a victory for common sense," said the retiring president, Jim Murphy.

A previous attempt to change the union's policy failed at a special conference in Derby last year.

During the debate the Blairites accused those on the left and centre of the union, who defended the policy of indulging in rhetoric. "Rhetoric doesn't pay the bills and students can't eat slogans," said the president-elect, Douglas Trainer.

Mr Murphy said the policy would cost more than £10 billion. "Even if that money were available are we hon-

estly the most vulnerable people in society? If you think so, you look the homeless or a patient on an NHS waiting list in the eye and tell them that."

The left's defeated presidential candidate, Clive Lewis, said abandoning the policy would be against the interest of the poorest students. "Your so-called realism will create yet another barrier to those struggling to enter higher education. This vote will determine where the next generation puts its commitments," he said.

Grants have been reduced by 20 per cent in two years and the loan facility increased by an identical amount. More than two thirds of students are in debt, according to a report by the National Westminster Bank. The average amount owed by those under 21 is £1,548; those aged 22-26, £4,301; and mature students, £7,817.

Mr Trainer, aged 35, said the policy change would make the union's negotiating position more credible. "I don't think it will make it any easier for any government; what it will do is give me a seat at the table with other interested parties with a policy that I can defend."

Trainer, president of NUS Scotland, took the national presidency after the first round of preference votes by 536 to 458.

Cambodia gunmen seize Briton

Nicholas Cumming-Brace in Bangkok and Angella Johnson

CAMBODIAN gunmen yesterday seized a British de-mining expert and his local team near the north-western provincial capital of Siem Reap, the country's main tourist destination.

Christopher Howes, aged 36, a former sapper from Bristol, was working with an interpreter and 27 Cambodian de-miners north of the famous Angkor Wat temple complex when the heavily armed gunmen struck at about 9.30am.

Mr Howes, employed as a specialist for the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), a British-based charity, has been helping to train civilians in the detection and destruction of anti-personnel landmines.

Six of the Cambodian staff made their escape, apparently by running through a minefield and contacting workers on a United Nations aid project.

MAG's director in London said the Cambodian government, the British embassy

Hostages

Other Britons being held abroad:

□ Kashmir, India: Keith Morgan, 34, of Middlesbrough and Paul Wells, 23, of London — seized on July 4 1995 by members of Al Faran, a previously unknown Kashmiri separatist group.

□ Irian Jaya, Indonesia: Daniel Start, 21, of London; Bill Oates, 22, of Jedburgh, in the Borders; Anna McIvor, 20, of Bournemouth; Annette van der Kolk, 21, of Fleet, Hants (all Cambridge University graduates) — seized on January 8 by members of the OPM Free Papua Movement.

and the UN were helping with negotiations for all the hostages' release. "We would like to affirm that our de-mining operation in Cambodia will continue," he said.

The Cambodian co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, flew to Siem Reap yesterday to review security in the area and supervise efforts to obtain the remaining captives' release, Western sources reported.

But both MAG and Cambodian officials were yesterday groping for information to establish the identity of the abductors, reported to be armed with automatic weapons and rocket launchers.

Khmer Rouge guerrillas have been active in the area, blowing up bridges, attacking road transport and laying booby traps. Other aid agency personnel working close to the MAG team yesterday in an area five miles north-west of Angkor Wat are understood to have pulled out after receiving warning reports of Khmer Rouge guerrilla movements nearby.

But officials are also investigating the possibility that the de-miners may have been seized by a group of Khmer Rouge defectors living in the vicinity. They are said to be disgruntled by the government's failure to give them the same recognition and assistance as other defectors.

Government troops are reported to have moved quickly into the area after reports of the abduction. But the gunmen appear to have left, taking two MAG vehicles, radios and other equipment.

Mr Howes, who has worked as a de-miner in Kuwait and Iraqi Kurdistan, arrived in Cambodia in November, only moving to Siem Reap in January to set up operations in the province.

In 1982, Khmer Rouge guerrillas seized and later released another British de-miner working for the Halo Trust. But yesterday's abduction was the first involving a foreigner since 1984, when Khmer Rouge elements seized seven Westerners, three of them British. Only one, an American woman aid worker, returned alive.

The abduction coincides with a government offensive against Khmer Rouge strongholds near the Thai border. Last week they occupied Pailin, a shelled-out town of symbolic importance as a gateway to gem- and timber-rich areas hitherto controlled by Pol Pot.

Charity Commissioners curb animal campaigns

Continued from page 1

responsible charity, we must now accept human needs are paramount."

Officials claim a "robust" redrafting of its policies and a drive to double its 28,000 membership could offset the first casualty of the ruling has been a campaign against the British-financed use of chimpanzees for vivisection in Holland.

Two other high-profile causes are now open to legal challenge — the anti-hunting and live exports campaigns.

Several keynote publications face the axe in their present forms and the membership ban on intensive farming in place since 1980, is also in doubt.

The ruling is a victory for the blood sports and landowning interests which have pumped millions of pounds through the recently formed Countryside Movement with the specific intention of challenging animal rights campaigns.

Sir David Steel, chairman of the movement, wrote to the Charity Commissioners to complain that the RSPCA should be limited to welfare and should not campaign outside that remit, and that it should not be allowed to stop anyone joining just because they did not agree with its policies.

At the same time, the movement's close ally, the British Field Sports Society, urged members to join the RSPCA and change it.

A hundred applications have been arriving daily and the total is now about 2,000. The first 100 were in time to confer voting rights for the society's annual meeting in June.

Richard Ryder, chairman of the RSPCA's public relations and campaigns committee, commented: "I am very concerned and I can only appeal for people to join the RSPCA to head off this influx of blood sport enthusiasts."

Mr McCall dismisses in his advice that the RSPCA could stop being a charity. It would need parliamentary approval and even then the assets would still be governed by charity law because that was how they were amassed.



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4 BEEF CRISIS

Birds Eye and British Airways join boycott as meat workers laid off

Countrywide slaughter is only answer, say farmers

Barbie Dutber and Stuart Miller

FARMERS' leaders yesterday demanded a special slaughter scheme to remove older cattle from the food chain as escalating confusion and plummeting consumer confidence brought the beef industry down further.

The frozen food giant Birds Eye declared that it too was bowing to consumer pressure and halting the production of beefburgers.

British Airways announced that it would no longer serve beef to child passengers. Abattoir and meat workers faced redundancy as business collapsed at slaughter houses and cattle markets across the country.

The National Farmers Union proposal, already presented to the Government, would result in the removal of all older cattle. Around 12,000-15,000 dairy cows which are slaughtered every week would be incinerated rather than used in meat products, with the farmers receiving full compensation.

With upwards of 800,000 older cows going to abattoirs each year, the NFU estimated that compensation payments could amount to £700 million.

The NFU said the move, although not warranted on the basis of scientific evidence, was the only way to restore consumer confidence in British beef. It is the first time the body has allowed consumer pressure to outweigh scientific advice on the issue.

NFU president Sir David Naish said: "The events of the past week show that we have gone beyond the stage of relying solely on science. The Government must take immediate action because the steps announced so far have failed to restore confidence among consumers."

Farmers from across south-east England are threatening to descend on Westminster tomorrow in a French-style demonstration if the Government does not introduce compensation measures.

Around 2,000 farmers are expected to attend a meeting at South East Marts, one of the region's biggest livestock auctioneers, in Guildford tomorrow. No cattle were sold

yesterday at the market, where around 300 animals are sold on a normal day — a situation which was echoed at marts across the country.

The numbers of cattle sold at auction has slumped by 94 per cent in the last week while the average price has fallen by 23.5p to 97.11p/kg — a drop of 19.5 per cent — according to the figures from the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Sheep sales have risen by 29 per cent, while pig sales are up 10 per cent. The ABP abattoir in Hordley, Shropshire axed 57 jobs, Midland Meat Packers of Crick, Northamptonshire, sent 150 workers on holiday for two weeks.

The meat industry employs 600,000 workers, including farmers, abattoir employees, vets, inspectors, and production staff. Auctioneers are also being hit by the rapidly falling demand, with some markets reporting selling no cattle.

Birds Eye said it had halted beefburger production at its factory in Lowestoft, Suffolk, the only site in the UK where it makes burgers, until there was "more clarity" on the

BSE issue. Birds Eye burgers already in the shops would not be withdrawn.

"Whilst we remain confident about the quality and safety of our beef products, we have decided that in light of continued consumer concerns we are reviewing the use of British beef and are considering options such as alternative sourcing and product reformulations," the company said in a statement.

British Airways has banned British beef from child menus on its flights, and will only offer Argentine or prime Scottish steer beef as an option if adult passengers request it.

"In acknowledgement of passenger concerns about BSE and following detailed examination of the current facts, we have adjusted our menus to remove British beef where it is the only choice available," said a spokeswoman.

"This includes removing all beef or beef products from all children's meals."

Leader comment and Letters, page 9; Will Hutton, page 9



Farmers listening to NFU officers reporting on the beef crisis at a meeting near York yesterday, where one official said: "Unfortunately, beef is now guilty and we have to prove it is innocent". The 300-strong audience applauded speakers calling for an immediate slaughter policy, as "our customer, the housewife, is terrified". PHOTOGRAPH BY DEN NEEPE

MPs savour safe steak from duke's guaranteed disease-free Scottish herd



Duke of Buccleuch... offers life history for every carcass

David Hencke on a Commons perk

MINISTERS and MPs can dine on beef safe in the knowledge that every morsel is guaranteed free of BSE by an aristocrat, backed by a 400-year tradition of quality.

While the public has to rely on guarantees from Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, and Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, MPs sitting down to a meal in the mother of parliaments can be sure that every portion of beef on the menu has come from a steer

whose diet and health have been supervised from birth to the slaughterhouse on an hereditary peer's estate at Dalkeith in Scotland.

The ninth Duke of Buccleuch has scooped 95 per cent of the Houses of Parliament's Refreshment Department's beef order, after promising not only a guaranteed feed free of offal products but a healthy life history for every animal raised on his estate.

The estate's publicity says that even after slaugh-

ter any animal with too much fat will fail to get the duke's seal of approval.

The duke, educated at Eton and Christ Church College, Oxford, was Conservative MP for Edinburgh North from 1960 to 1973 and a parliamentary private secretary to Scottish Office ministers under Harold MacMillan.

His dukedom was created by Charles II in 1683 — three years after the restoration.

David Dorricott, execu-

Wily Sir Leon fails to halt EU ban

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE European Commission's veterinary committee last night rejected British beef and strengthened border security to stop farmers in Northern Ireland trying to smuggle their cattle southwards.

FRANCE: One hundred cows were slaughtered in Brittany under the French policy of destroying the entire herd as soon as one animal shows symptoms of BSE. This brought the total number of slaughters to 300 since the beginning of this year and about 700 since the first French cases, in 1991.

GERMANY: The agriculture ministry of Brandenburg state ordered the slaughter of 49 British cattle to ensure they would not spread the disease. The federal government has asked the regional states to

Action around the world

order farmers to slaughter all 5,000 or so cattle imported from Britain.

HONG KONG: The government advised frozen beef sellers in the territory to declare the origin of their products before selling it. Hong Kong does not import fresh meat from Britain and said it sourced only 2 to 3 per cent of its imported frozen beef from the UK.

EGYPT: The authorities turned away a third ship carrying Irish cattle, the Irish embassy in Cairo said. An embassy official said about 5,200 cows were now stranded off the city of Alexandria.

GHANA: The government announced a ban on beef imports from Europe, which it said was temporary pending the results of European Union deliberations.

but the commission insists it can prevent it being exported in case it is later reimported into the EU.

Gerry Kiely, its agriculture spokesman, said: "Our opinion is that we have the power in order to avoid meat coming back on to the market."

Alex Bellas adds: The banning of a product exported in such quantity and in as many forms as British beef is without precedent in world trade, and impossible to enforce, it was claimed yesterday.

Neither Customs and Excise, the Department of Trade, the agriculture ministry nor the Meat and Livestock Commission said they understood how a global ban would work.

"Whether we swing into action or whether the EU would do it, we just don't know. It would be very complicated," a ministry spokesman said.

A DTI spokeswoman said: "There is not a situation where one product from one country has been banned worldwide. It would be very complicated. We would have to agree not to export it, and Customs would police it."

The initial difficulty in policing a ban would be discovering the destinations of all the beef and beef products, as there is no official list. Some beef is processed into substances like gelatin which is then distributed to food companies to make products like wine gums and vitamin pills.

Britain exported 250 million of beef last year, of which 283 million went outside the EU. South Africa, Mauritius, Ghana and Angola are the main non-European markets.

...in the THREE MONTHS UP TO THE END of December 1995, 1,033,568 patients were waiting for up to 11 months, and 20,889 for between 12 and 17 months.

These figures are based on data from the Health Service Research Unit, Edinburgh, 1995.

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Ministers' record in the scare

Michael White and Patrick Wintour

WHEN scientists on SEAC, the advisory committee on BSE-related diseases, told the Government last week that there may after all be a link between BSE — mad cow disease — in cattle and rare cases of CJD in human beings, ministers knew they would have to inform the public and tighten controls on the food chain. But did they handle the crisis well?

Should ministers have acted more quickly on SEAC's new warning?

Ministers acted quickly by Whitehall standards. SEAC met on Saturday March 16, and the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, was told, as was John Major, the following Monday. SEAC met again on late in Tuesday night. It delivered its advice to ministers at 10.30 next morning — by which time the Daily Mirror had broken the story. MPs were informed at 3.30pm.

Should ministers have said more at that stage — or less?

Having Mr Dorrell and the Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, both make Commons statements was a mistake. It upped the public anxiety level.

Did Health and Agriculture send conflicting messages?

Probably. Mr Dorrell, instinctively cautious, became more robust as the crisis deepened. But in his initial Commons statement, he gave the impression that Britain might be on the verge of an epidemic. Mr Hogg has been criticised for openly raising the prospect of a mass cull of older cattle in TV interviews on Sunday. Yet it was not the Government but SEAC sources which triggered dramatic stories about the option of slaughtering all 11 million cattle.

But key uncertainties were left unanswered on Day 1? Yes. Ministers initially could not say if children were more at risk. And at first they rejected slaughter calls. Both omissions added to consumer fears. Ministers hid behind scientific advice which, after years of misjudgment, the public mistrusted.

Europe took umbrage too? Yes. The EU has legitimate claims to want to isolate the problem area, Britain, but trade and politics also play a role. John Major's Eurosceptic government has few friends in such wheel-dealing. Worse, Mr Hogg had sent his junior, Tony Baldry, to the monthly meeting of farm ministers 48 hours before the crisis. He didn't mention BSE.

Has the Government been undermined by an irresponsible Opposition? Harriet Harman has pulled few punches, clearly siding with the consumer rather than the beef producers. The shadow health secretary may have caused some private unease with Gavin Strang (shadow agriculture) who has been running a long-term campaign to re-position Labour as the party of the rural interest. With their strong rural base, Liberal Democrats also faced dilemma, but swung being a mass slaughter once the National Farmers Union demanded one.

Did the scientists also expect ministers to go further than

their own recommendations in order to restore public confidence in beef?

Precisely. Ms Harman argued yesterday: "The scientists, ironically, understood the politics better than the politicians." Ministers would have preferred her this week simply to call on the public to eat British beef, but she instead argued for no beef in school meals, and crash prosecutions of illegal slaughter houses.

Was Mr Hogg's hint at mass slaughter last weekend overruled by the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, on cost grounds? Clarke was not alone in arguing that to spend billions against scientific advice would be foolish. Market forces have changed their minds.

Isn't this government supposed to champion market forces? Yes. Yet ministers have chosen to back experts against "mad" public opinion. The Tory magic touch — simple slogans that voters understand — have also been absent. Eating Beef? It's Safer Than Crossing the Road.



Pressure from the US and its G-7 allies linked to Russian policy concessions wins a \$10bn IMF loan

West gives Yeltsin a boost



Yeltsin: Policies frequently infuriate Washington

Martin Walker in Washington
THE International Monetary Fund was meeting last night to give final approval to a \$10.3 billion credit facility for Russia, of which more than \$1 billion should be disbursed before President Boris Yeltsin faces re-election in June.

"Most Western governments would say that that Yeltsin has continued the reform process in the right direction, despite great pressures," a senior diplomatic source said yesterday.

The recommendation was finally made after a series of trade and economic concessions by Moscow. These ranged from cutting import tariffs and taxes on oil and gas exports to closing tax loopholes and maintaining the annual \$500 million purchase of US frozen poultry.

When concern about Mr Yeltsin's health was at its height, senior US policy-makers were musing whether a new campaign by a visibly sick president would be in Russia's best interests.

Dislikes are Russian objections to the enlargement of Nato, the clumsy brutality of the war in Chechnya, the sale of advanced weaponry and nuclear technology to Iran, and the rough rhetoric about the restoration of the boundaries of the old Soviet Union.

Troops attack rebel villages

David Hearst in Moscow

RUSSIAN forces fighting rebels for control of Chechnya yesterday began a blitzkrieg bombardment of forces loyal to Dzhokhar Dudayev, on the east and southwest of Grozny. Meanwhile, President Boris Yeltsin, on a state visit to Norway, announced that large-scale operations would stop before the presidential election in June.

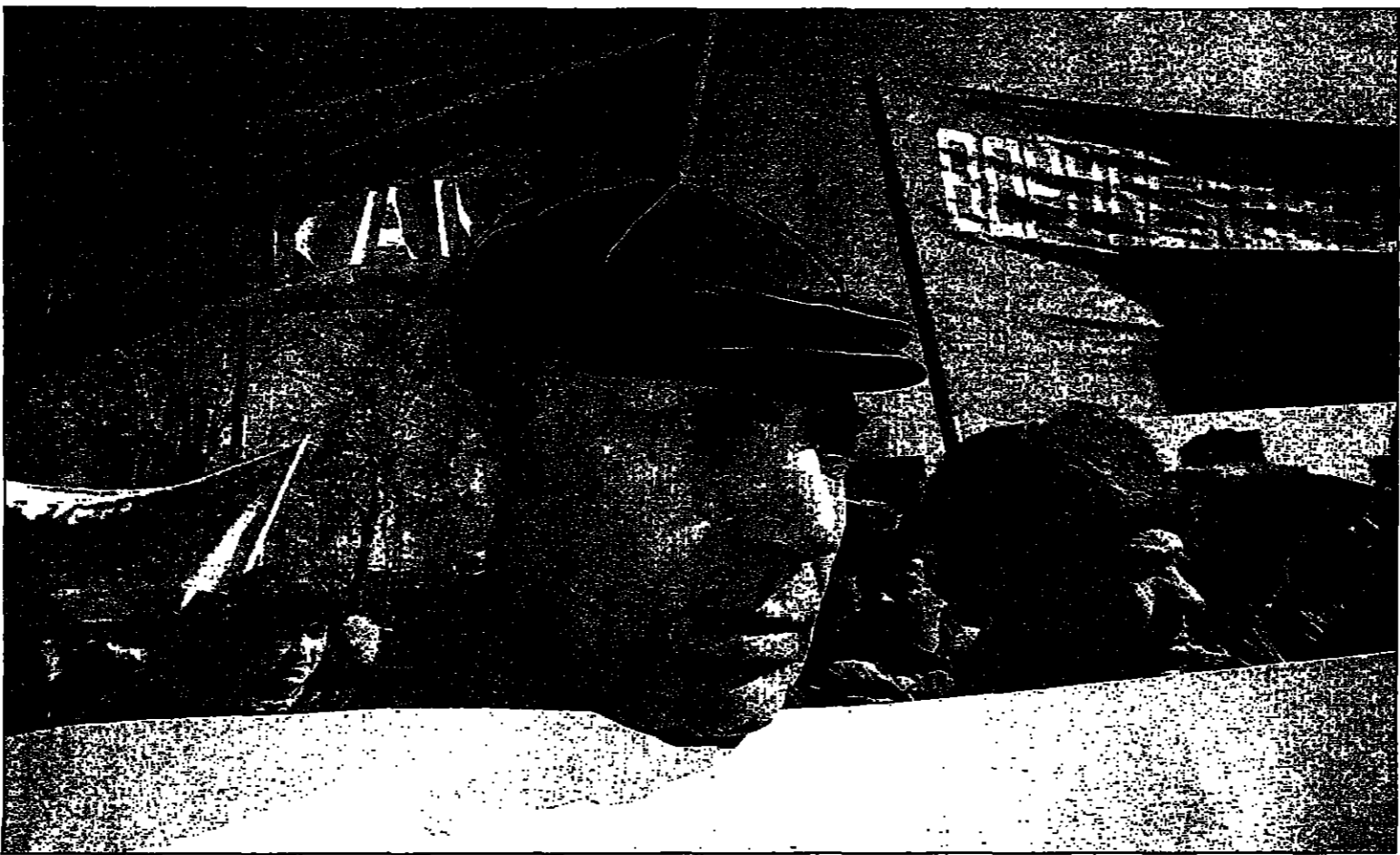
However, there was no sign of consensus on what stopping large-scale operations would mean. Senior defence sources quoted yesterday said Mr Yeltsin's plan was to withdraw all units to Dagestan and Ingushetia, on the Chechen borders, and keep them there in readiness "until the summer".

Army and interior ministry generals have warned about the dangers of a unilateral withdrawal, which they see as having nothing to do with military strategy and everything to do with organising the best conditions for Mr Yeltsin's re-election.

In a speech to parliament, General Anatoli Kulikov called Chechnya a "knot of criminality" and warned that forces loyal to Moscow's placeman, Doku Zavgayev, would be massacred without Russia's protection.

Yeltsin's policy in Chechnya is in total disarray. He is caught between the conflicting needs of having to satisfy his army and appease the Russian electorate, with whom the 15-month conflict is deeply unpopular.

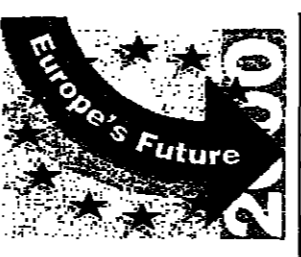
Russian forces — with *carte blanche* from the Kremlin to attack Chechen villages until the end of the month — were reported to be continuing operations against Bamut, Arichkova and Old Achol. Operations against Chechen fighters holding out in Grozny also continued.



Wage cap... Russian farmers picket the main government building in Moscow yesterday to demand unpaid salaries. PHOTOGRAPH: ALEXANDER ZEMLANICHENKO

Europe's Scandinavian new dawn fades

The Swedes feel cheated and even the Europhile Finns are wary of a single currency. But, writes Greg McIvor in Stockholm, while its neighbours repent, Norway, which stayed out, is sitting pretty



WHEN the European Union opened a well-coming door to membership applications from Sweden, Finland and Norway in the early 1990s, hopes ran high in Brussels that the Nordic states' entry could rejuvenate moves towards deeper European integration.

The inter-governmental conference has failed to capture attention and only 18 per cent of Swedes say they have heard of the event.

Brussels has led the prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, explicitly to rule out another plebiscite on Europe at least until the next century.

In Sweden, which narrowly voted in favour of membership in 1994, discontent with the fruits of entry has burgeoned almost from day one of membership.

Unemployment remains at record levels and interest rates are still substantially above those elsewhere in Europe.

Food prices, predicted to fall by up to 10 per cent due to increased competition, rose slightly in the aftermath of entry and today remain high.

Meanwhile, in Denmark EMU participation is one of several opt-outs engineered to persuade Danes to ratify the Maastricht treaty in 1993.

The prime minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, has warned that any attempt by member states to dilute them would have to be endorsed by a new referendum.

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The leaders of the EU gather in Turin on Friday to discuss increased European integration and expansion to the east. But visions of the future diverge wildly. On these pages, the main arguments of the debate are explored in the context of the EU's history and the challenges ahead



Leonard Doyle on how the EU came into being

Britain fails to cloud a vision

CHARLEMAGNE and Napoleon both tried and failed to unify Europe by the sword, but it was Adolf Hitler who provided the catalyst for what is now the European Union.

After the second world war several factors combined to push Western Europe towards unity: fear of the Soviet Union, the need for reconstruction while preventing another war, and awareness of American might.

America's Marshall aid plan began reconstruction and helped promote freer trade but it was a former French brandy salesman in Britain, Jean Monnet, who prepared the way for European union.

Monnet, a member of France's postwar government, proposed that the iron and steel industries — both then central to a nation's ability to wage war — be taken from national control and put under an independent authority.

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) turned France and Germany from enemies into partners. It opened for business on January 10, 1952, but then, as now, Britain could not see itself as European.

An enduring feature of European integration is how successive British governments have tried and failed to prevent Europe from unifying, only to cut a deal in the end. France and Germany's alliance has long outlived predictions of its early demise.

The Europeans got on with creating a new breed of international organisation, with Britain's instinctive scepticism brushed aside as ambitious plans for monetary union by 1999 were drawn up.

Maastricht did not deal with the historical opportunity which has presented itself of really uniting Europe, by enlarging the number of member states to as many as 27.

Britain's wish to bring in the former communist states of Eastern Europe as quickly as possible must now be balanced against the need to have an EU that works. More qualified majority voting is obviously in order.

The shock persuaded Monnet that the path to unity lay with economic integration. He began lobbying for a United States of Europe.

With Britain staying away again, talks began in Messina in 1955. The resulting Treaty of Rome — signed on March 25, 1957 — brought into being the European Economic Community (EEC), dedicated to creating a common market.

A key aspect was that the elimination of trade barriers and establishment of a common external tariff would occur with common institutions. As Britain's Eurosceptics ruefully point out, these have now taken on a life of their own. Member states are bound by all the rules of the club, not just those they like and, utopian as it sounds, the goal of "ever closer union" is in the rulebook.

From its beginning in 1957 the EEC was a roaring success, but protectionism was also allowed to grow within the Common Agricultural Policy.

In 1961, Britain acknowledged it had backed the wrong horse in setting up the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and applied to join. France's president, Charles de Gaulle, vetoed the move.

Britain, Ireland and Denmark eventually joined the EEC in 1973. But before long

In 1961, Britain acknowledged it had backed the wrong horse

Margaret Thatcher, as Prime Minister, began her battle over Britain's EEC contribution — a problem only resolved in 1994.

The Single European Act went into effect in 1987 completed the internal market — the first time a British initiative had taken hold. But there was a price for ensuring the freedom of goods, people, services and capital needed.

France's president, Charles de Gaulle, vetoed the move.

Britain, Ireland and Denmark eventually joined the EEC in 1973. But before long

The cause of closer European union is the cause of democratic reform of the British state, social progress and an effective system of rights and freedoms, writes **John Palmer** in Brussels

The argument in favour

IT IS difficult to conceive of a more tragic or revealing metaphor for the isolation of the British government and the suspicion with which it is regarded by its European partners than that provided by the BSE crisis.

The shadow of BSE will hang dark over the launch in Turin on Friday of the EU conference to review the Maastricht treaty.

From the moment it joined the European Community in 1973, Britain has all too often found itself out of step with everyone else.

While most other countries end up in a minority within the union's councils from time to time, Britain has made being a minority a way of life.

The failure of British ministers to consult the EU in advance of the devastating announcement about the possible links between BSE and CJD is regarded as all too typical of the arrogance which London generally displays towards the union.

Attitudes to the British were not always so jaundiced. The rest of the EU was reluctant to write off the Tory government even under Margaret Thatcher as irredeemably unwilling to join the club, let alone as an inveterate wreck.

The last time a British leader was able to cash in on the dwindling fund of goodwill for Britain was during the Maastricht treaty negotiations in the early 1990s. Then, against their better judgment, the others conceded to Britain "opt outs" from key common policy goals, notably workers rights and the single currency.

This attitude of bemused tolerance for British obstruction in the EU is now giving way to a steady determination that the rest of Europe should no longer be sacrificed to the Tory party's wars of religion over Europe.

John Major and his colleagues will learn the hard way during the course of the treaty review conference that the rest of the EU would prefer to postpone an agreement than to sign up to one dictated from London.

If this means that Germany's chancellor, Helmut Kohl, France's president, Jacques Chirac, and the rest simply have to sit on their hands until the Tories are removed from office, that is what will happen.



Reform of the Maastricht treaty is essential. The original vision was a legal and political mess which sought to mould together contradictory visions of the future. On the one hand, the treaty promised continued evolution towards a decentralised, democratic federation of nation states: "an ever closer union of the peoples of Europe".

At its heart this involves maintaining the Commission's sole right to make public legislative proposals, accepting greater majority voting in the Council, Ministers, having law-making powers shared more equally between the Council and the elected European Parliament and ensuring a system of uniform law adjudicated by the European Court of Justice.

At the same time, the Maastricht treaty also entrenched a quite different system of "inter-governmental decision-making. This is legal fiction, the creation of an unaccountable club of nation states which can act collectively in crucial policy areas such as foreign and security affairs, justice, police co-operation and internal security.

The truth is that precious little ever gets decided where unanimity, rather than majority voting, is the rule and where policy making is shaped by the lowest common denominator of national interest.

The consequences of this failure to act can be seen from Bosnia to the treatment of asylum seekers and the fight against unemployment. The inter-governmental decision-making also makes a mockery of parliamentary accountability and deepens the already worrying gulf between European decision makers and voters.

Reform of the EU institution is no longer a vital question. The present system was built for the six founding countries of the EU 40 years ago, and is now stretched to breaking point. But the step-by-step expansion of the union to most of central and eastern Europe — as well as Cyprus and Malta — is now only a matter of time.

To try to run a European Union with 30 or more members under the present constitution is to invite paralysis, and possible eventual implosion.

In this context, the real criticism to be made of the

process beginning in Turin is that, far from being too ambitious, it will set its sights dangerously low.

As far as the other 14 countries are concerned, the IGC is about the minimum of reforms needed to keep the show on the road until enlargement makes more radical change unavoidable in a few years' time.

Neither the Commission nor the EU as a whole is seeking powers in new policy areas. What the reformers want is a more effective, democratic and open system of decision-making in those areas where the EU is already responsible.

Displaying a bizarre capacity to abuse the meaning of words, this is described by Tory — and other — Eurosceptics as constructing "a centralised Euro-superstate".

This kind of talk may still evoke a sympathetic echo in the Home Counties, but it is ridiculed in Scotland, in Wales and increasingly in the English regions.

A centralised superstate does exist: it is called the United Kingdom and it is directed not from Brussels but from London.

This is why the cause of closer European union is the cause of democratic reform of the British state — a Bill of Rights, a written constitution, freedom of information laws, electoral reform, and self government for Scotland, Wales and the English regions.

As a growing army of British beneficiaries of EU laws and European Court rulings can testify, the cause of closer European union is also the cause of social reform and an effective system of cross border rights and freedoms.

Stephen Bates on Turin's challenges

Grand vision toned down

THE choice of a renovated Fiat car factory in Turin for Friday's meeting to launch the inter-governmental conference (IGC) strikes some observers as symbolic.

A modernised structure will emerge from the old framework, they say. Alternatively — bearing in mind the old test track on the roof — there will just be a recycling of new models which go round in circles.

Nothing will be decided this week. There will be pageantry, ceremonial and a desultory general chat at the conference centre into which the factory has been converted — another potential metaphor for modern Europe — before prime ministers, chancellors and presidents depart.

In the afternoon there will be a brief meeting of foreign ministers to start laying out the parameters of negotiations which everyone expects to stretch into the middle of next year.

In June 1997 the IGC should eventually culminate at a meeting in Amsterdam — the Dutch will hold the EU's rotating presidency when the negotiations are concluded, just as they did in December 1991 when the Maastricht treaty was agreed.

But no one knows who

will be in office by then. Susanna Agnelli, Italy's 73-year-old foreign minister — and a member of the family which made its fortune from Fiat cars — almost certainly will not be there. Her name is not either. That is what heads of government mean when they look to the conference lasting beyond the British election, in the hope of a more pliant Labour government. But, given the moderately sceptical noises from Labour's leadership, they may be disappointed.

When the IGC was laid down in the Maastricht treaty four years ago, the agenda was expected to be somewhat different: a more

gun-ho drive towards economic and monetary union, greater integration and enlargement.

Now, following recession, the turmoil of the EMU and the anguish in securing ratification for the treaty, the agenda is more circumspect — even if the rhetoric is not. It is nonsense to suppose what will emerge after a year of talks is the grand vision of Germany's chancellor, Helmut Kohl, of a Europe with a united economic, defence and foreign policy.

The details of the revised treaty at the core of the IGC will be hammered out by officials in Brussels, with oversight from foreign ministers and six-monthly checks from heads of government. Britain's representative at the discussions will be Stephen Wall, the quiet mandarin who is our ambassador to the EU and was once a highly valued member of the Downing Street machine during Margaret Thatcher's tenure.

The main issues concern the structure and institutions of the EU as it prepares for enlargement to include the states of eastern Europe. The IGC will not be about monetary union — that was decided at Maastricht — nor will it concern itself with agriculture and regional policy, arguably



John Palmer was born in 1938. He joined the Guardian in 1964, where he was the Business Editor, and a leader-writer. He has been European Editor in Brussels since 1975. He is the author of two books on Europe: *Trading Places and Europe Without America: The Crisis in Atlantic Relations*.

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European and monetary union, and the steps to 1999, and provided for the development of foreign and defence policies.

British Prime Minister John Major topped down the anti-European, saying when the right-wing Conservative Party's Thatcher, Britain opted out of the monetary union timetable and the protocol known as the Social Chapter.

1995

Austria, Finland and Sweden finally accede to membership of the EU, but Norway says "no" in a referendum to the delight of its fishermen and farmers and the dismay of the capital, Oslo.

1996 - the EU's '5,000-mile checkup'

A year-long inter-governmental conference begins in Turin this Friday, probably ending in an Amsterdam summit in June 1997 to amend the Maastricht Treaty.

Enlargement

The biggest challenge ahead is the enlargement of the EU to bring in the former communist countries of central and eastern Europe as well as Cyprus and Malta. EU membership could rise from the present 15 to 27.

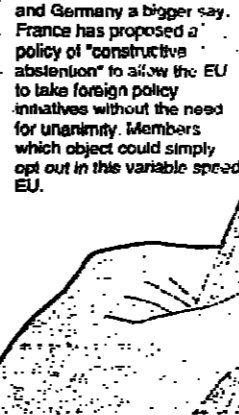
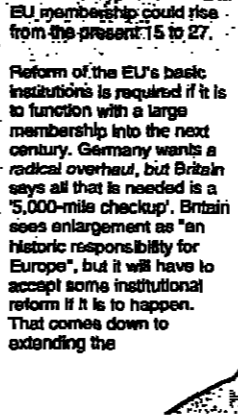
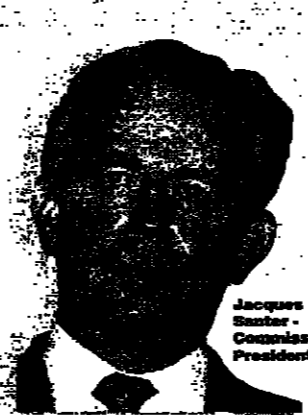
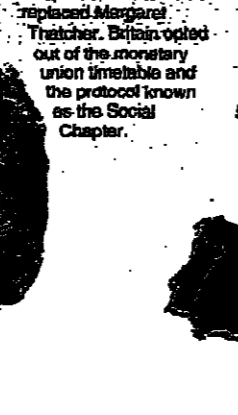
controversial system of qualified majority voting.

One possible compromise could be to allocate voting rights according to a country's size, giving larger countries like Britain, France and Germany a bigger say. France has proposed a policy of "constructive abstention" to allow the EU to take foreign policy initiatives without the need for unanimity. Members which object could simply opt out in the variable speed EU.

The road ahead

A year of difficult negotiations lie ahead for Europe. There is a call for economic, political and defence issues to be addressed. Change is needed to enhance European democracy (by granting more power to the European Parliament). Eastern and Central Europe wants to join Nato. Effective foreign policy machinery is needed and Europe's 20 million unemployed need work.

It is also clear that public opinion backs change. A poll published yesterday showed 71% for an effective common foreign policy and a striking 81% support a common European defence policy.



Conservative and Labour supporters should make common cause to resist the Commission's vision of a Euro-superstate created by taking lump-sized bites out of nations, says **John Redwood**

The argument against

THE European Commission has set out its stall for the inter-governmental conference. The Foreign Office has been telling us that this will be nothing like the embattled sessions of Maastricht — just a 5,000-mile service of the treaty.

Reading the Commission paper, it certainly wouldn't want them servicing my car if that's their idea of how to do it. It is not so much a 5,000-mile service they have in mind, more a case of taking our car away and ordering us all on to the European bus. Or, given the enthusiasm for a common foreign and defence policy, perhaps it is about ordering us on to the common European tank.

More attention should be

foreign policy, defence and home affairs what Maastricht did for monetary policy and economic affairs. At the heart of its ideas lies a common foreign and security policy, common defence procurement and home policy under the EC institutions.

It wants the Schengen arrangements for common borders and frontier controls applied to all EU states. It wants immigration and crime policies brought under EC influence. It wants a proto-foreign minister for Europe to co-ordinate analysis and act as the spokesman for a common European policy. In short, it wants a European state.

So what, some will say. The Commission always wants more power and it would be surprising if it did not advance such an agenda. It is, after all, the servant of the member states. None of these things can come to pass unless all member states want them to.

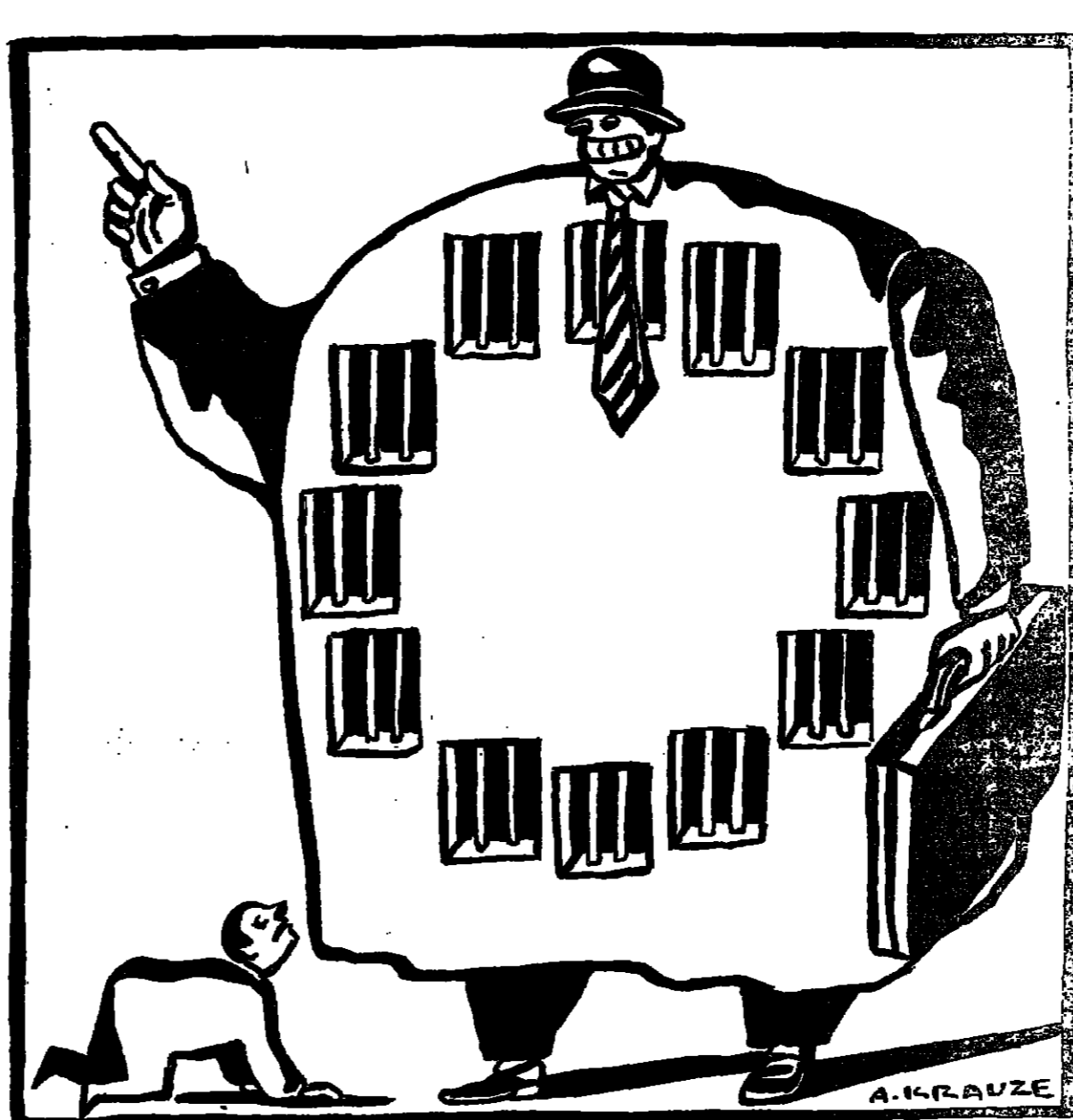
That is true, but we should remember that this Commission is close to the wishes of the German and French governments. It often seems to be taking dictation from Bonn and Paris. Much of what the Commission has set out can also be found in the speeches and comments of the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. That is why we should take this seriously, and why we should offer an alternative.

Some socialists will say they welcome the idea that Britain could be forced to accept the social chapter and other elements of the solidarity package coming from Brussels. As a result, they may even think that accepting further big moves towards a Euro-superstate would be a good idea.

They should remember that not all common policies devised by the Commission will be equally in their favour. If Brussels does not wish to protect birds from slaughter or farm animals from unsatisfactory treatment, that same union can or could stop us from doing anything about it ourselves. That same union may force socialist governments in the EU to adopt market policies in some areas that they do not like.

There should be common cause between many Conservatives and Labour supporters in Britain to keep our right to make our own decisions in our own, democratic way.

Britain's alternative vision is of a Europe of nations. We want a partnership, common



Britain's alternative vision is of a Europe of nations. We want a partnership.

given to these continental documents, as they are likely to have more influence over our lives and policies than most of the things written here.

This particular document is an overwhelmingly ambitious agenda for change. It has a clear vision: the creation of a Euro-superstate. It sets about setting there by taking lump-sized bites out of the nation states of Europe. When it was first published, newspapers in Britain picked up the attack upon national vetoes, and then moved on. There is much more to be said than saying that practically everything should be settled by qualified majority voting.

The Commission targets Britain, saying that the social chapter opt out is unacceptable. It wants to "pick and choose Europe". It does not even offer a pick and choose social chapter of the kind Tony Blair now favours. It proposes strengthening the European Court and making it even more independent of national governments. It wants the president of the Commission to have a role in choosing the other commissioners as if he were a president or prime minister choosing a government.

The Commission sees this conference as doing for

action where it makes sense and is freely entered into, along with trade to increase our prosperity.

We do not need new defence arrangements. We have what we need through Nato. It would be quite wrong for the EU to force its four neutral members to arm themselves more and join a defence union.

We do not need new frontier arrangements. Britain as an island and Greece with no common land frontiers with the rest of the EU should not have to join a continental

system of border controls, meaning more internal police surveillance in a vain attempt to make up for the lack of action at frontiers.

The last thing we need is a beasted up Supreme Court of Europe overturning more acts of Parliament and instructing us how to compensate Spanish fishermen.

In place of this, we need to offer a vision based on the new technology of the Internet and the global marketplace. Only by welcoming this explosion of computing power

and understanding its meaning for the economy, politics and our society, can we offer people jobs and prosperity.

The technology points to much more individual, family and local decision-making and less centralised government. It points to people counting more, not less. The Commission's vision, based on the Franco-German plan, is old fashioned, backward-looking and damaging. It seeks ever more central power in Brussels and Frankfurt, when we should be questioning even

the extent of centralised power in London, and finding more ways to return it to the people.

John Redwood was born in 1951. He has been a Member of Parliament for Wokingham since 1987 and has played a leading role in setting out European issues to Parliament and the wider public. In the last year he has published on the subject of the single currency and put forward proposals for the inter-governmental conference.

agency held up for a year by London's intransigence over whether disputes should be resolved by the court.

The Scandinavians would like employment raised at the IGC — arguably, the EU's 18 million unemployed form Europe's most pressing social issue. Britain is again opposed to EU interference in social affairs — although one of the few European commitments a Labour government would make would be to sign up to the Maastricht social chapter.

Scepticism sweeps Scandinavia, page 5

the sectors most in need of urgent reform.

Not only greater transparency or democratic accountability feature prominently — two other areas where the EU needs to change if it is to convince its 360 million inhabitants that the European vision is one they should share.

Central to the debate will be the decision-making process. Should more areas of policy be decided in the Council of Ministers by qualified majority voting in order to ensure at least that some decisions are taken as the EU expands? Or, as Britain wants, should national vetoes remain?

The danger of legislative sclerosis is great — there are currently more than 20 ways in which legislation can be made, and the aim is to reduce these to three. Fourteen member states favour qualified majority voting on more issues, but the government — ever fearful of loss of sovereignty — is still fighting to preserve the right of Britain to be able to vote down resolutions it does not like.

The likely compromise will be to give more weight in voting to national populations, at the same time reinforcing the so-called "Luxembourg compromise" which allows mem-

ber states to opt out if they believe vital national interests are threatened.

In return, there will probably also be a gesture towards expansion in the process of co-decision making between the Parliament and Commission. Britain is also resisting this and, along with France, has opposed giving the Parliament even observer status at the conference. By contrast, Germany and the Benelux countries want greater powers for Europe's only directly-elected body.

The Commission itself has scaled down its ambitions. Nevertheless, there will be calls from Britain for only

remain central. On justice and home affairs, Britain is again opposed to the EU taking a larger role in domestic decision-making. Both Britain and France oppose suggestions of a common immigration policy with open internal frontiers.

Britain also wants to discuss the role of the European Court of Justice, and has revived its ideas for the court's decisions to be reviewed and limited.

This is likely to receive limited sympathy from other member states exasperated by British objections to European, the intelligence co-ordinating police

MR WALLER does not share most Germans' fear of giving up the mark for the euro.

Yes, I think we should have a common currency. Why not? It will make things simpler. We should at least try it and see what happens. Probably it will be fine.

Perhaps because his profession regularly takes him outside Germany, and perhaps also because Rhinelanders are reputedly more internationalist than the average German, he is also a firm supporter of Chancellor Kohl's federalist vision for Europe.

He can foresee a United States of Europe.

"Why shouldn't we be like America? It works there, doesn't it?" — Jan Traynor, Bonn.

MR DIMITRIADES says he feels very European and is all for the union.

"I love the idea of moving around Europe freely, without having to bother about visas, but for us Greeks, the greatest disadvantage is the austerity measures we have had to endure to keep up with our partners."

"I'm not sure if I'd like the Council of Ministers to have a bigger role in local decision-making, simply because I don't know what the results would be. But it would be very good to have a president of Europe and, as a trader, I think a single currency will be one of the best things about the EU."

"I'm all for a Euro-army as well, especially if it helps us out here on the edge of Europe." — Helena Smith, Athens.

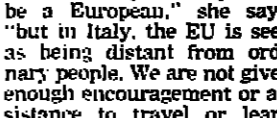


Claudia Troilo
Claudia Troilo is a 25-year-old student from Rome.

MS TROILO is enthusiastic about the EU, but disappointed with the way it is working out.

"I certainly feel myself to be a European," she says, "but in Italy, the EU is seen as being distant from ordinary people. We are not given enough encouragement or assistance to travel or learn European languages."

Did she mind that the Council of Ministers could become increasingly powerful? "It's got to be better than the governments we've had," she jokes. — John Hooper, Rome.

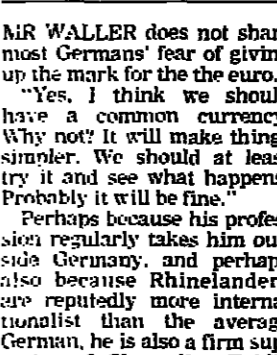


Chedli Kharroubi
Chedli Kharroubi, aged 39, is a Tunisian grocer in Paris.

MR KHARROUBI fears European integration could result in the rights of immigrants being eroded if France abandons its historic ties with former colonies.

"I feel European — not thanks to any institution but because this country is so mixed," he says.

He fears the prospect of the Council of Ministers increasingly being able to rule over national parliaments. — Alex Dural Smith, Paris.



Fritz Waller
Fritz Waller is a lorry-driver aged 50 from Sevel, across the Rhine from Bonn.



Fred Harper
Fred Harper is dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Land Use at the University of Plymouth.

MR HARPER is firmly in the Eurosceptical camp.

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Euro-cash for cows

Major could extract a deal to unite his party

OUT of adversity can sometimes come strength. If John Major has a true feel for the way political business is done in Europe, then he would be preparing to turn the apparently insoluble BSE crisis into a triumph at the European Union summit in Turin this weekend. Of course there is no logical connection between mad cows and the first session of the inter-governmental conference. But summits are not about logic. They are about deals — high-level, multi-dimensional deals which can affect a nation's destiny.

Mr Major is faced with a health scare threatening to incinerate not just the carcass of the beef industry but the economic recovery along with it. He also has to handle an IGC which could split his party. The political connection between these problems should be as plain as day, but leadership and finesse are needed to capitalise on it.

As far as the beef issue is concerned, the Prime Minister should be focusing on two key questions: how many cows have to be destroyed to satisfy consumers at home and abroad that British beef is safe? And how large a proportion of the cost can be contributed by Brussels? Mr Major responded furiously to the European Commission's announcement on Monday proposing a world-wide ban on UK beef exports. But British BSE poses a political problem around Europe and other governments would have been on a hiding to nothing domestically if they had not backed the ban. Instead of arguing the legal toss, the Government should be seeking a solution. Instead of bleating about the Commission, ministers should have been closeted with Jacques Santer asking his help to broker a solution.

In spite of the diplomatic whinge offensive, the opportunity for a deal

was spelled out clearly enough yesterday by Mr Santer's spokesman. There were no hard and fast rules, he said, but after the Belgian swine fever epidemic the Commission had been able to pay half the compensation costs. We cannot tell what deal Mr Major could achieve for the British beef industry, but as sure as eggs is salmonella-reduced eggs it would be better than he could achieve going it alone.

The deal would probably be better today than at the start of the week. If the EU leaders overreacted for political reasons, they may accept a political or financial price for it. This is a club whose members help each other out in the interests of maintaining common political credibility. Once French or Belgian finance ministers are locked into paying for the sanitisation of British herds, their agricultural colleagues will be remarkably supportive of the agreed common line.

In EU diplomacy everything is always linked. Every benefit has a price. To save the British beef industry and the British economy, Mr Major will have to go further than he otherwise would have done at Turin to accept the inevitability of EU institutional reform. How far is anybody's guess. The question is whether he has the finessing skill to do it. Does he realise that concessions which might split his party at a later date could smell sweeter when he is waving a fat Eurocheque on his return from Turin? How many cows graze in constituencies with Eurosceptic MPs? This is a prime minister who still thinks he can win the next general election and therefore cannot for ever cop out of decisions about the future shape of Europe. Amid the crisis surrounding the ofal of Europe, he can yet steer back to the heart.

The real bandits in Chechnia

Yeltsin cares only about Russian unity, nothing for the people

IS THE big plan for Chechnia to be peace or war? Boris Yeltsin talks of withdrawal, but the last few weeks have seen a ferocious offensive by his troops in which thousands of civilians and refugees have been trapped, and even Red Cross workers have been threatened with violence. Yesterday there was more inconsistency between word and deed: while villages were shelled and a new offensive began to drive separatist fighters out of Grozny, military sources in Moscow spoke of "partial withdrawal". The defence minister claimed that the president would announce his new plan to end the conflict next weekend. Mr Yeltsin had already hinted at a secret peace plan a month ago — before he authorised (or at least allowed) the Russian forces to run wild. Any proposal now should be treated with extreme scepticism, the more so since the same military sources say that the interior ministry's troops — responsible for the worst indiscipline and excesses in the past — plus two military brigades will remain in Chechnia permanently.

The president and his advisers have sought to disarm criticism by protesting that the Chechnia situation is a crisis not of their making and that it defies simple solution. Mr Yeltsin has described everyone else's peace proposals as "extremely abstract". While saying that he must end the war in

order to win re-election in June, he dismisses the demands of others to end the war as "irresponsibly radical." Withdrawal of the federal forces, he claims, would leave the civilian population of Chechnia at the mercy of "bandits" who will then indulge in "biatant terrorism" in order to stay in power. This is self-delusion. When Russian forces pound civilians with guns, rocket launchers and helicopter gunships, who are the real bandits? A new OSCE report gives details of robbery, looting and arson by Russian soldiers, and the targeting of centres of population without justification. In effect, large numbers of the Chechen population have been deemed hostile because guerrillas can be found in their midst: the parallels with US barbarism and self-delusion in the Vietnam war become ever more obvious.

Mr Yeltsin's alleged concern for the ordinary people of Chechnia is hardly the real issue. He and his officials have made it clear that what is really at stake is the indivisibility of Russia — and his pride. Gen Dudayev, the separatist leader, is not an attractive figure but most Chechens now would prefer him to marauding Russian troops. The federation will not be maintained by force. And in their apparent preference for Boris as the next president, Western governments must not turn a blind eye to the horrors of his war.

Sense and sentimentality

With thanks to Henry, Cassandra and above all, Emma

SIRS, please forgive me — I am agitated, nay, I am more than agitated, I am astonished beyond expression, my thoughts are in tumult. Pray do not think me uncivil if my feelings exceed my fluency of expression. For have I not longed, these 200 years, to procure your affection and regard? Yet I could not, in rational expectation, hope to receive any commendation of so fine a nature. I scarce know how to support myself, nor this handsome firegod. How can it be possible that I, who live in a small retired village in the country, could provide such a lively and intelligent company as yourselves with novelty and amusement? How can my poor work compare with the great schemes of Mr Tarantino? I fear that generosity has tempered your discernment. As I once wrote to my dear nephew, Hollywood's medium is the great one of Celluloid; mine is a little bit (two inches wide), of Ivory, on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour!

Last evening, as I walked in the higher grounds of Sunset Boulevard I enjoyed a tete-a-tete with Mr Hugh Grant. He had lost none of his civility,

and advised me that an acceptance speech should take notice of some unfortunate affair of the day. If this be so: my work is magnified by the fact that the streets of heaven are too crowded with spinsters. They number a thousand for each one of the red ribbons we wear here tonight.

It cannot be proper, nay, it cannot be kind, further to test your patience with my emotions, but I must not retire before expressing my gratitude to my dear brother and agent, Henry Austen, and my sweet Cassandra, dearest and kindest of sisters. Above all, let us remember Miss Emma Thompson. Is she not an angel? Before I quit England, I visited her shrine in the Groucho Club. As I knelt in prayer, I presumed to conjecture her feelings on this most happy day. Would she exclaim, with that violence of expression which habitually followed a night of excess, "Arsenole again", or would it be, "Huge spot has appeared on chin"? No, I imagine this great occasion would inspire her most affecting ejaculation: "I've just ovulated!" Forgive me for taking up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.

(Prof) John M Smith,
28 Copse Edge,
Cranleigh, Surrey.

Please include a full postal address, even on e-mailed letters, and a telephone number. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used.



Letters to the Editor

Abort this idea, Minister

THE notion that single mothers should be encouraged to put up their children for adoption risks inventing the stigma attached to birth outside marriage (Adoption law aims at single mothers, March 25). The fact that a woman is single when she becomes pregnant should not be taken as an indication either that her pregnancy is unwanted, or that she is less able to provide a caring home for her child. A third of births now take place outside marriage, ie to "single" women. Although half of these are to couples living together and three-quarters are registered by both parents.

Twenty years ago the social stigma attached to birth outside marriage would have made it generally impossible for a woman to consider keeping her child. That women's options are wider is surely a sign of progress. It can only be deeply retrograde to put pressure on women to opt for adoption purely because of their marital status.

Karin Pappenheim,
Director, National Council for One Parent Families,
255 Kentish Town Road,
London NW5 2LX.

FOR John Bows, political correctness manifests itself in policies of adoption agencies which place an upper limit of 35 years on the age of would-be adopters. Yet his department, in a circular of 1994, advised that agencies should consider women aged 35 and over. A new OSCE report gives details of robbery, looting and arson by Russian soldiers, and the targeting of centres of population without justification. In effect, large numbers of the Chechen population have been deemed hostile because guerrillas can be found in their midst: the parallels with US barbarism and self-delusion in the Vietnam war become ever more obvious.

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WE support Claudio Abbado's attempt to defend and protect the integrity of Mahler's music in its entirety. Do we want the best bits of Rubens' Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus (a titillating prospect), the "funny bits" from War and Peace and a Singalong with the Best Bits of John Cage's Alan Farrow (Letters, March 25), who writes of "he who pays the piper" calling the tune, exhibits a very confused attitude towards creativity and patronage. Artists do not manufacture to demand: anyone seriously imagining that Mahler, Bach or Mozart actually composed their "best bits" and were then required to pad out the rest must reassess their own musical knowledge and integrity. If Mr Farrow had any idea of the true values that Mr Abbado represents in his life of first-class achievement in conducting, let alone the creations of the composers he makes available through his art, he would not presume to put a pipe to his mouth.

Mark Coote and Mary Moss,
The Claim,
Gallowayclough Lane,
Norley, Cheshire WA5 8LH.

YES, of course the record companies are cashing in with their compilation CDs. But I remember, when early LPs cost near the equivalent of today's £40, how grateful I was for the opportunity to extend my familiarity with good music through "samplers". These laid the foundations for years of enjoyment of concerts and a large collection of recorded music that, 40 years on, continues to give immense satisfaction.

(Prof) John M Smith,
28 Copse Edge,
Cranleigh, Surrey.

adopt. The circular states that this is "in line with Article 6.1 of the European Convention on the Adoption of Children". What seems to have escaped the attention of the minister and his department is the fact that the upper age limit on adopters is not a piece of political correctness dreamed up by adoption agencies. A requirement of Article 7.1 of the same European Convention is offered as the justification for retaining the marriage requirement for those who wish to adopt as a couple. This is only one example of the way that adoption continues to serve the interests not of children and their families but the imperatives of government policy on the family. Adoption is assured a future, if only because it remains the simplest expedient for the transfer of the cost for the care of children from the public to the private purse.

(Dr) Murray Ryburn,
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston,
Birmingham B15 2TT.

HEALTH Minister John Bows's suggestion that the Government should promote adoption as "an acceptable and valid alternative to abortion" is ludicrous. He needs to consider why a woman should suspend her own self-interest and endure the stress, discomforts, inconvenience and health risks of pregnancy and labour to produce a child she does not want. Women are more than walking wombs.

Ann Furedi,
Director, Birth Control Trust,
16 Mortimer Street,
London W1N 7RD.

WAS born in London to a single mother, and adopted (Letters, March 25 and 26). I am unable to get any information to help me search for my birth parents from my church-run adoption agency, despite the fact that it has all the information I need. Mine was a closed adoption, and the agency is intent on keeping things that way.

At no point were my adoptive parents told that I might want to know who my birth parents are, who it is I look like, whether there are any hereditary diseases waiting for me around the corner. As a child I was encouraged explicitly to renounce any such interest, and did so, because it was what my adoptive mother wanted to hear. Despite this I get on well with both of my adoptive parents.

But if the 1977 Adoption Act has all but wiped out adoption then it's a good law. The Government wants to change adoption law? It can start by giving me my records. Then I can start undoing some of the damage caused by adoption law prior to 1977. Birth parents should opt out of search procedures if they wish, not have to opt in. The national contact register shouldn't cost birth parents to join.

We can encourage adoption, and it might save the Government thousands of pounds in benefit. But if it could, at a cost of those thousands of pounds, register adoption which was undertaken just to save money and inconvenience, I'd sign up right now. Especially if it was mine. Name and address supplied.

Musical notes

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(Prof) John M Smith,
28 Copse Edge,
Cranleigh, Surrey.



It's time Robin put the Boots in

BEFORE your leader (March 26) championed the enduring value of Robin Hood as a brand image, the highest-profile support offered to Nottingham's "most illustrious citizen" came — ironically — from the city's present sheriff. But it is not to assume that Nottingham as a whole is cooling towards its legendary outlaw.

The calling in of image-makers to develop a new brand mark for Nottinghamshire is a response to pressure exerted by Boots and the city's two universities. Perhaps the people of Nottinghamshire need a Robin Hood figure more than ever, if only to protect us from such arrogant applications of corporate muscle.

Andrew Hedgecock,
9 Hood Street,
Sherwood,
Nottingham NG5 4DE.

NOTTINGHAM never was the home of Robin Hood. This proud connection can be better claimed by Mansfield and Worksop, which were within Sherwood Forest. The city was, in fact, the home of Robin's villainous enemy the sheriff — a truly medieval Thatcherite. Boots could hardly want a more appropriate symbol.

Fred Westacott,
14 Avenue Road, Chesterfield,
Derbyshire S41 8TA.

Further servings of bovine material to tempt your appetite

IT IS helpful that John Gray puts BSE in the context of the other new threats to human security, such as the Chernobyl disaster (Nature fights back, March 26).

Researchers and risk assessors now rank alongside the military as defenders of human security. And traditional security decisions are based on whether a threat is, as Gray says, significant rather than just on statistical probability.

The truth, like a jigsaw picture, comes not from counting the pieces but from placing them one at a time in the correct place. Our new-age prophets are those who can see the picture before the effort is completed. But their efforts will mean little for human security while governments put profits before prophets. (Dr) Christopher Williams,
Global Security Programme,
University of Cambridge,
Botolph House,
Botolph Lane,
Cambridge CB2 3RE.

AS A hospital consultant and a ward sister turned farmer, we wish to point out that, on current figures, the risk of getting CJD from beef or lamb is:

- Around 40 times less than the risk of dying in childhood;
- Around 500 times less than the annual risk of dying in a road accident;
- 3,000 to 8,000 times less than the chance of dying of breast cancer if you are a woman, depending on whether you smoke, are overweight and so on;
- Several hundred times less than the chances of dying of multiple sclerosis.

You've got to eat brain, spinal cord or intestine from an affected animal before there is any significant risk. The thing that causes both CJD and BSE, called a prion, is an abnormal form of the one that normal people and higher animals have. It is only made in brain, spinal cord and intestines. And it isn't in actual meat as far as anyone knows. Names and address supplied.

MAY I suggest a recasting of the way in which specialist advisory committees, like Seac (the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee), operate as a near-invisible layer of government (Leader, March 25)?

Advisory quangos — on the safety of medicines, hazardous substances, radiation in the environment, toxic chemicals in food and consumer products, etc — sit in professional judgment on a whole range of issues which, like BSE, touch on people's lives where they are most vulnerable.

A Country Diary

THE WREKIN: What's vernal about this equinox? A mistle (misty sheets of drizzle) settles across muddy fields where snow flattened and matted the grass. The surrounding landscape, blotted out by mist, echoes with the sound of crushing metal from a scrapyard across the tracks from rows of new unsold cars awaiting the same inevitable fate. A little spark of irony on spring rebirth perhaps — but doused by the air's wet blanket and the rolling drone of traffic. Under a row of railway poplars — their uprooted knobby skeletons scratching against the sky — is the remains of a pond, filled with concrete blocks where the sweet green leaves of nettles slowly thicken. Tribes of finches and fieldfares — these fields must fare pretty grimly for them just now — flutter in sun-waves and vanish. Suddenly a skylark, invisible in the mist, ignites along above the bloodless earth like a firework. The "blithe spirit"

But they are as secretive as government itself.

They are accountable to civil servants and ministers, not to the public, and their findings are — as the BSE saga has shown time and time again — vulnerable to political manipulation. It is time for the key specialist advisory quangos to be reclassified as tribunals; to be made independent of government, and to be made subject to explicit rules of openness and process. Stuart Weir,
Democratic Audit,
University of Essex,
Wivenhoe Park,
Colchester CO4 3SQ.

MY mother, Tikvah Alper, was director of the Medical Research Council's Experimental Radiopathology Research Laboratory, was the first to hypothesise that the scrapie agent contained no DNA. She based this primarily on three experimental results: the scrapie agent was extremely resistant to radiation by comparison with DNA; the size of the "target" presented by the scrapie agent was smaller by an order of magnitude than any known virus; and the scrapie agent was not inactivated by ultraviolet light of a wavelength absorbed by DNA. Her (then controversial) view is now almost universally accepted. If Dr Narang continues to assert that the scrapie contains DNA, he should present his evidence to show this.

The Government should be condemned for its over-optimism about BSE and for failing to take effective action at the appropriate time. But criticism will be effective only if it is based on good science. Michael Sterne,
67 Netheravon Road,
London W4 2NB.

THE SEAC opinion that children and adults are equally susceptible to BSE-contaminated meat misses the point. The prospect of my young children contracting CJD in 10 years' time aged 15 is a far more appalling prospect than that of me contracting it aged 52. The Government should immediately eliminate all animals aged six and over from the human and animal food chain. (Dr) Jonathan D G Jones,
19 Waverley Road,
Norwich NR4 6SG.

CAN we assume that life insurance companies will now want information about your meat-eating preferences? Simon Carr,
259 Westbourne Park Road,
London W11 1EE.

Shelley took it for, sings with "harmonious madness" — a song of rebellion: a triumph over greyness and the cloying mud of apathy, flung with insane clarity against a world loaded down with its own misfortunes. Taking their cue from the lark, everything that chirps, chirrup and twitters joins in an irrepressible chorus. Well might Shelley have asked, "What love of thine own kind? What ignorance of pain?" as the lark and other birds fire their songs into a world that cares so little for them. So many skylarks and birds of agricultural landscapes have been wiped out in recent years. But this is a moment when pagan celebrations of spring find purchase in nature: a moment which places the dull armour that encloses and protects us from wild voices. If we could only let nature represent itself, then, as Shelley said, "The world should listen then, as I am listening now." PAUL EVANS

Diary
Matthew Norman

If there is one positive thing to come out of the BSE crisis, it is the transformation of the Secretary of State for Health, Dozy Dorell, the hermit of Heritage, has suddenly emerged as Dynamo Dorell, the superhero who races from studio to studio faster than a speeding bullet, reassuring us that beef is the very elixir of life (or, in the current mantra, safe in every known usage of the word). To gauge how effective he has been, let us glance at Whitehall. A civil servant called yesterday lunchtime to report a recent trip to the canteen. Steak-and-kidney pudding had suddenly vanished from the menu, he said, and was replaced by a dish called "Corned Beef Hash (Argentinian). And even as he read the menu, a sign reading "Liver and bacon" was removed, amended by felt tip, and swiftly replaced. "Liver (lamb's) and bacon", it now announced. If the Health Secretary wants to issue a personal reminder that beef is safe, he may not need the ministerial Rover. The canteen in question belongs to the Ministry of Health.

MEANWHILE, in better news for the Deynamo, the Meat and Livestock Commission has awarded its vastly coveted public-relations account to Sir Tim Bell. Lowe Bell won the account in a bidding war two days before mad cow terror was ignited. Despite the splendid timing, MD Stephen Sherbourne is reticent. "As a matter of policy," he said, "we have a strict code about talking to the media." Ah, yes, of course. Mr Sherbourne then rang back to admit that Lowe Bell has the account, and to refuse to say anything at all on the record. Perhaps he is preserving his strength for the battle ahead. We wish him and Sir Tim luck.

FIRST the end of Take That, and now another massive blow to the morale of the pop nation. The Eton- and Balliol-educated playboy Andrew Neil — "the thinking woman's Dal Llewellyn", as he now styles himself — is still not ready to settle down. "Getting married and having children requires a high degree of commitment," writes the Voice of Controversy in his sparkling Daily Mail column. "It is not a commitment I have ever been able to enter with high hopes of success." Of course there's no hurry — he's still only 46 — but wouldn't it be wonderful if he did meet the right girl? If you think you might be able to write Andrew Neil of the Diary — attaching a recent picture — and, in moderately strict confidence, I will pass it on.

AFTER all the sackings, last week was a quiet one for the Glaswegian Charlie Wilson, acting editor of "the Independent". Perhaps to celebrate this, on Friday he received a visit from fellow Mirror Group executive Kelvin McKenzie. As to what they discussed, it would be futile to guess; but as he left Gentleman Charlie's office, Kelvin cast a glance over the newsroom, and murmured: "Still f***ing swarms of them..."

THE fog enshrouding Terry Major-Ball's Australian trip next month begins to lift. Terry has said nothing, I must stress, but others are saying that he is to visit the Melbourne flower show in the capacity of "visiting celebrity". Also among the party will be the writer James Hughes Onslow, and two Chelsea F.C. players. It seems Melbourne wishes to emulate the famous flower show in west London. Terry's attendance is the idea of Australian cultural attaché Rebecca Hossack. As before a visiting celebrity, all his expenses — not least the journey with Qantas, the airline with the world's finest safety record — will be met by the government of Victoria.

THERE is more sad news from the bankruptcy-notices page of the London Evening Standard. Soon to make that melancholy journey to Carey Street, it seems, is Mary Bartlett of Bromley in Kent. According to the notice, Miss Bartlett is a financial adviser by trade.



A mad way to run a country

Commentary
Will Hutton

AS AN exercise in ham-fisted, second-rate government the events of the last week take some beating. Ministers have lost control of a potentially controllable situation with disastrous results. The reasons they have lost control betray the deep-seated structural malfunctions of British government that now urgently require to be addressed. There are well-worn excuses. Technology and science, it is said, are breaking such terrifyingly unpredictable ground that it is silly to hold ministers to account for developments whose malevolent by-products were not anticipated at the time decisions were taken. There are new levels of risk with which we simply have to live. Nor is Britain suffering the deprivations of poor regulation and venal producer interests. The way the French allowed Aids-infected blood to be used unchecked for years or the Spanish failed to pre-

vent lethally infected olive oil from entering the food chain show that BSE is but another example of a general trend. Yet while both arguments have force, neither counters the case for constitutional reform: rather they reinforce it. Increased danger is an occasion to strengthen civil society's defences rather than to abdicate. From the earliest moments in 1980 when ministers decided to take minimal action to inhibit the spread of BSE while keeping the quality of their advice secret, to the unwillingness last week even to pre-notify the European Commission of developments, we have watched Britain's discretionary, secretive system of executive government at work. Or rather not at work. The residual informal checks and balances in the system — the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, the role of the Civil Service as an independent custodian of the public interest and even the tradition of MPs having an obligation to Parliament that transcended party interest — have all been gradually whittled away since the middle of the century. What is left is the brutal exercise of executive power legitimised by quinquennial first-past-the-post elections and the shrinking, now rather dog-eared grace of the House of Windsor. This is too thin a basis upon which to organise the contract between

governors and governed when the nature of legislative and executive decisions is becoming more complex. Yet what makes the constitutional arrangements especially menacing are their current ideological marriage with a corrupted view of free-market economics. The best free-marketarians are as suspicious of the way beef producers and British agriculture gain such privileged treatment from the Ministry of Agriculture as any liberal. Competition should rule and subsidies be reduced. Yet in the eyes of ministers the promotion of "market forces" has become coterminous with the simple promotion of British business interests as British business defines them. Regulation is "burdensome" only if it obstructs a vested business interest from doing what it wants. Opposition to monopoly does not extend to more aggressive policing of take-overs even if they reduce competition. Government intervention is bad unless it can boost private profits. The awesome power of the British state has thus been deployed to service vested and partisan interests — whether it be allowing regional electricity companies to be snatched up in takeovers, or offering sweeteners of billions to the consortium bidding for the Eurotunnel link. The approach to Britain's beef pro-

ducers is the same phenomenon. Indeed the treatment of Britain's cattle herds over the last 45 years accurately reflects the state's decline into a chronic reluctance to protect the public interest, especially if it involves regulation or public expenditure. The aggressive and rapid responses to the outbreaks of foot and mouth disease in 1967/68 and 1981, even though the disease was not commensurate to human beings, stand in sorry contrast to the tale of prevarication and unwillingness to act of the last 10 years. In 1987 alone 211,825 cattle were slaughtered with compensation at today's prices of some £250 million, while the record of the debates in the Commons of the much more limited outbreak in 1981 reveals a Conservative Party that still believed in public purpose, regulation and the common interest. Fifteen years of new-right demagoguery and those instincts have been debauched and corroded. Douglas Hoeg, arguing in cabinet earlier this week for the slaughter of cattle over 30 months old, would have had more allies in 1981; now he has to rely on the clamour outside, extending yesterday to the National Farmers Union, to make a case that should have had more general ministerial support. YET while ministers, as in the Scott inquiry, protest that every decision in the long catalogue of errors was in itself defensible, each is framed by the same weakness: scientific research hamstrung by government cuts; regulation inhibited by lack of manpower to verify that rules were being obeyed. And over the past few weeks a now demoralised Civil Service, whose public-service ethic has declined, apparently less capable of

forging a proper line — and persuading ministers to adhere to it. Executive discretion, pace Lord Acton, absolutely corrupts those who come into contact with it. A British government jealous of its sovereignty and terrified of its Eurosceptical backbenchers was never likely to notify the European Commission of its intentions. Britain now confronts a worldwide ban on its beef exports, while it finds itself negotiating for potential compensation for any cattle slaughter from the EU — having maximised hostility to its position. This is diplomatic incompetence of a high order — almost matching its handling of consumer confidence. The British executive branch of government requires more active scrutiny of its decisions by a legislature that is not in thrall to it than can only come from an elected second chamber. There must be a Freedom of Information Act so that officials know that their advice will be publicly scrutinised. The intermediate agencies of the Health and Safety Executive, scientific advisory boards or regulatory agencies — need to be properly funded and independent rather than poverty-stricken ciphers of central government. Constitutional reform is meant to be the concern of only the metropolitan chattering classes. It is not a doorstep issue, it is said. Conservative politicians rage that it will lead to ruin. Not so. Rather it is the way Britain is governed that is leading to ruin — and for some of our fellow citizens the agonising experience of living through their own political collapse. The case for reform is proven. What is required is politicians with the nerve and commitment to sell it — and then execute the change.

Sir Robert Peel keeps an eye on the contest



David McKie

JACK Straw, shadow home secretary, sits at a table in Wilnecote School flanked by the headmaster and a senior policeman, in a room full of people most of whom are not listening, debating what schools should do to steer children away from drugs. It's a sensible discussion, but it's clear that it wouldn't be happening were it not for the TV cameras which will carry it this lunchtime and evening into the homes of South East Staffordshire, which goes to the polls after Easter to elect a successor to David Lighthown. Later, Home Secretary Michael Howard is having his photograph taken in front of the statue of Tamworth's most famous citizen, Sir Robert Peel. Soon his gleaming hair will be through the shoppers of the new and apparently thriving Ankerside Centre, invading Fresha Fruits and the clock and watch shop, though not, I notice, the butcher's. Within a few hours these scenes will be brought to the people of South East Staffs by regional television. That, nowadays, is what byelection campaigning is all about. The old system, where the visiting statesman stayed for an evening meal, collapsed long ago. Even the traditional morning press conference is falling into disuse. The Tories in Tamworth aren't bothering, knowing all too well that a gleaming journalist trying to trip ministers up to get headlines featuring blunders. Labour cancelled theirs on Monday because Straw's train was late, but without any apparent regret, what they tend to get is reporters from Tory tabloids trying to embarrass the candidate, à la Peter Hitchens. TAMWORTH is roughly three-quarters of an hour from East Staffs. To the north is agricultural country where the BSE issue will trouble producers as well as consumers. The south-west corner is spiritually Sutton Coldfield, big houses and Birmingham affluence. Once a kind of siding off the infinitely weary A5, Tamworth itself is now all fast roads and motorway access and industrial development — though Reliant, whose spunky three-wheelers once helped to put the place on the map, succumbed to the recent recession. The population here has tripled since the start of the 50s, and nearly a quarter are under 16, so Tam-

worth traditions have less of a hold than they did. "It's up at the top of Market Street," says a woman directing me to Labour headquarters, "just beyond the John Peel statue." But you can't escape Sir Robert. The politicians keep dragging him into the argument. How proud he would be, the Tories burble, of the way we are cutting crime? What on earth would he make. Labour grumble, this man who elevated national cohesion above party contention, of the way the Tories have divided the nation over the past 17 years? Tamworth spent most of the 19th century sending Peels to Parliament. Not just Sir Robert, but his brother William; his son, also Sir Robert; and their relative relative John Drayton Manor, the home of the Peels, no longer exists; the grounds are a family theme park. "His main principle," wrote a biographer, "was that on entry into power he ceased to represent a party, because he represented a people." There's more than a hint of Tony Blair about that. IN THE centre of town, Labour are inescapably there, and nearly all the posters are theirs. The Tories have pitched their camp on an industrial estate on the Lichfield Road. Their posters are mostly in shades of red, with Drayton Manor, the home of the Peels, no longer exists; the grounds are a family theme park. "His main principle," wrote a biographer, "was that on entry into power he ceased to represent a party, because he represented a people." There's more than a hint of Tony Blair about that.

Guilty who still go free

David Horovitz argues that although Yitzhak Rabin's killer acted alone on the night, many of Israel's Orthodox rabbis also have his blood on their hands



TODAY, a four-and-a-half month ordeal will come to an end for Israel. The trial of Yigal Amir, confessed assassin of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, will reach its conclusion at the Tel Aviv District Court with an inevitable conviction for premeditated murder. The three-judge panel will dismiss desperate defence claims of psychiatric instability and brush away pleas for a reduced sentence for manslaughter, and the smiling killer will be carted off to a solitary jail cell, to await the formal handing down of a mandatory life sentence. While the sight of this arrogant, remorseless 25-year-old receiving his due punishment will be some comfort to Israelis still deeply mourning Rabin, it has become sady obvious that others who share at least some blame for the assassination are escaping justice, indeed are falling even to acknowledge any complicity in the crime. In the heated aftermath of the killing last November 4, Rabin's widow, Leah, rightly pointed a finger of blame at

members of the mainstream Israeli opposition parties, and especially the leader of the Likud, Benjamin Netanyahu, for fomenting the atmosphere of vitriolic extremism that helped prompt the killing. When rightwing Israeli radicals chanted "Rabin is a traitor" and "Rabin is a murderer" at Likud rallies, and waved placards showing Rabin's features overlaid with the thin black circles of a rifle target, Netanyahu went right on addressing the crowds, arguing mildly with some of the rabble, it is true, but not leaving the stage in protest, not explicitly denouncing the blatant incitement to murder. But far greater blame surely attaches to the many members of the mainstream Israeli rabbinical leadership, who for months prior to the assassination had been earnestly questioning the "Jewishness" of Rabin's land peace policies, and soliciting the learned opinions of their colleagues around the world as to whether, purely theoretically of course, the abandonment to Palestinian control of West Bank territory divinely promised to the Jews in the

Bible might merit the death penalty under the provisions of halachah (Jewish religious law). In a letter they sent out to 40 fellow rabbis early in 1983, a trio of prominent Orthodox rabbis wondered: "Would it not be appropriate to warn the prime minister and other ministers that if they continue to turn the residence of Judah and Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza over to the rule of murderers, according to Jewish law it will be necessary to put them on trial and punish them..." Amir, it should be recalled, was a student at the kolel

(full-time Jewish study centre) at Tel Aviv's Bar Ilan University, lapping up this kind of debate, seeking confirmation in Jewish texts that Rabin should indeed be put to death, and eventually openly discussing with fellow students the religious obligation to carry out the killing. On the night of the assassination, and in the months of his trial, Amir has consistently invoked Jewish religious teachings to justify his actions, even saying, when asked about accomplices, that his only real partner was God. Yet the very rabbis who, convicted of murder under secular Israeli law, and that he would go to jail for life. Yet his primary allegiance was not to the democratic state, but to a wickedly perverted interpretation of Jewish religious law. And he knew that, far from being damned, he would find quiet understanding, support even, among many of the purported guardians of Jewish law, Israel's Orthodox rabbis. Those accomplices have yet to be brought to justice. David Horovitz is managing editor of the Jerusalem Report and editor of a new biography, Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier of Peace (Peter Halban Publishers).

Come the revolution . . .

Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle reply to criticisms of their book which seeks to clarify New Labour's ambitions

AMID all the political posturing, two criticisms of our book *The Blair Revolution* deserve an answer. One is that we failed to resolve a central tension in New Labour — how can we offer voters reassurance and at the same time claim to be radical? Secondly, that amid all our incremental proposals, there is no coherent vision that knits together the whole. The policies we espouse are carefully constructed — but that is because of our conviction that lasting change can only be built on consensus. There is little point in a one-term government pushing ahead with hurried radical change that does not command genuine majority support — only to see the Conservatives return and undo it all. Our emphasis on constitutional and political reform is about rebuilding trust in

politics and creating a broad consensus for lasting change. This espousal of the new politics offers the chance to reunite the left and centre so that we can achieve stability of direction for a programme of long-term transformation of our country. That is how New Labour combines both realism and vision. The overarching vision is of a stakeholder society. This is not primarily about companies and how they are run. It's about giving every individual a stake in society. That is why the book emphasises measures to eradicate long-term unemployment, create opportunity in education and training and tackle the problems of "excluded" young people. Some of the rhetoric surrounding stakeholderism is wide of the mark. For instance, Will Hutton's otherwise generous review

must ensure the stakeholder company is kept on its toes. But it is not the responsibility of stakeholders does not mean accountability to them. It is not practical or desirable for company boards to be composed in order to represent different stakeholder interests or follow the German two-tier supervisory model. Boards should be accountable to shareholders; only shareholders or replace the management or sell their shares to someone else who will. Cultural change is needed in the relationship between boards and shareholders. At present, boards do feel under undesirable pressure to pursue short-term returns at the expense of their business's long-term organic development. But if management's strategic judgment is right, such myopia cannot be in the real interests of the company's owners — the pension funds and institutional investors. The solution is not heavy-handed legislation — but to make institutional investors more effective custodians of the enormous economic power they yield. We also need more effective mechanisms for replacing bad management before it has irreparably damaged a company's future prospects.

These reforms should not be seen as a high-profile campaign against the City of London. The problem of short-termism in the UK owes far more to our chronic failures of economic management which the Conservatives have exacerbated. One area for debate is whether the ease of mergers and takeovers under existing UK competition rules has artificially boosted the corporate-financial sector in the City and created a fee-driven vested interest which is undesirably distorting business priorities. Public policy could seek to correct that bias by re-balancing the rules of the takeover process. But we must not throw so much grit in the wheels that bad management is artificially protected. New Labour should aim for a robust model of capitalism that will equip Britain for the rigours of the global market in the 21st century. That model needs to be both responsible and dynamic, competitive as well as civilised. It will be unique to Britain's circumstances and it will be an adaptation of market capitalism, not the radical alternative to it for which some are still searching.

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John Snagge

The voice at the helm

JOHAN SNAGGE, the wireless announcer who gave Britain the news of the D-Day invasion, has died aged 91. His deep velvet voice graced many great and state occasions, but he was best known for his 50 years of Boat Race commentaries.

The second son of Judge Sir Mordaunt Snagge, he was educated at Winchester and Pembroke College, Oxford, and joined the BBC in 1924 as assistant station director at Stoke-on-Trent. It was at this pioneering relay station that he developed his rich vocal chords, a voice in keeping with the dramatic and stately occasions he was to describe without a hint of snobbery, patronisation, or ignorance.

His job in Stoke was to read news bulletins, sing duets with the producer on live children's programmes, and run a weekly show using the talent of the Potteries, including an amateur orchestra and chorus formed for the station. It taught him to cope with people whose accents and accents he did not always understand — and how to enjoy their company. When he returned to Stoke to re-open the station half a century later, several people recognised him in the street and at his former drinking haunts.

Snagge became an announcer at Savoy Hill in 1928 and moved to outside broadcasts in 1933, when pageants, state funerals and coronations became his beat.

Britain learned that the tide of war was turning at 9.23am on D-Day, June 6 1944, when Snagge read Communiqué No 1 from the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force: "Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France." As radio's presentation director during the war years, it was Snagge who brought news of Pearl Harbour and VE-Day. In 1953 he described the Queen's coronation service from Westminster Abbey.

Until 1980 he was the wireless voice of the Boat Race, turning what was often tedious into mystique to keep millions on the edge of their seats until the crews reached Mortlake brewery. Having rowed for his college, Snagge made his first commentary in 1931, the fifth year the event was broadcast. At that time the commentator had no contact with the shore from his launch, relying on flagmen placed at the landmarks to signal the position of the crews and acknowledge that

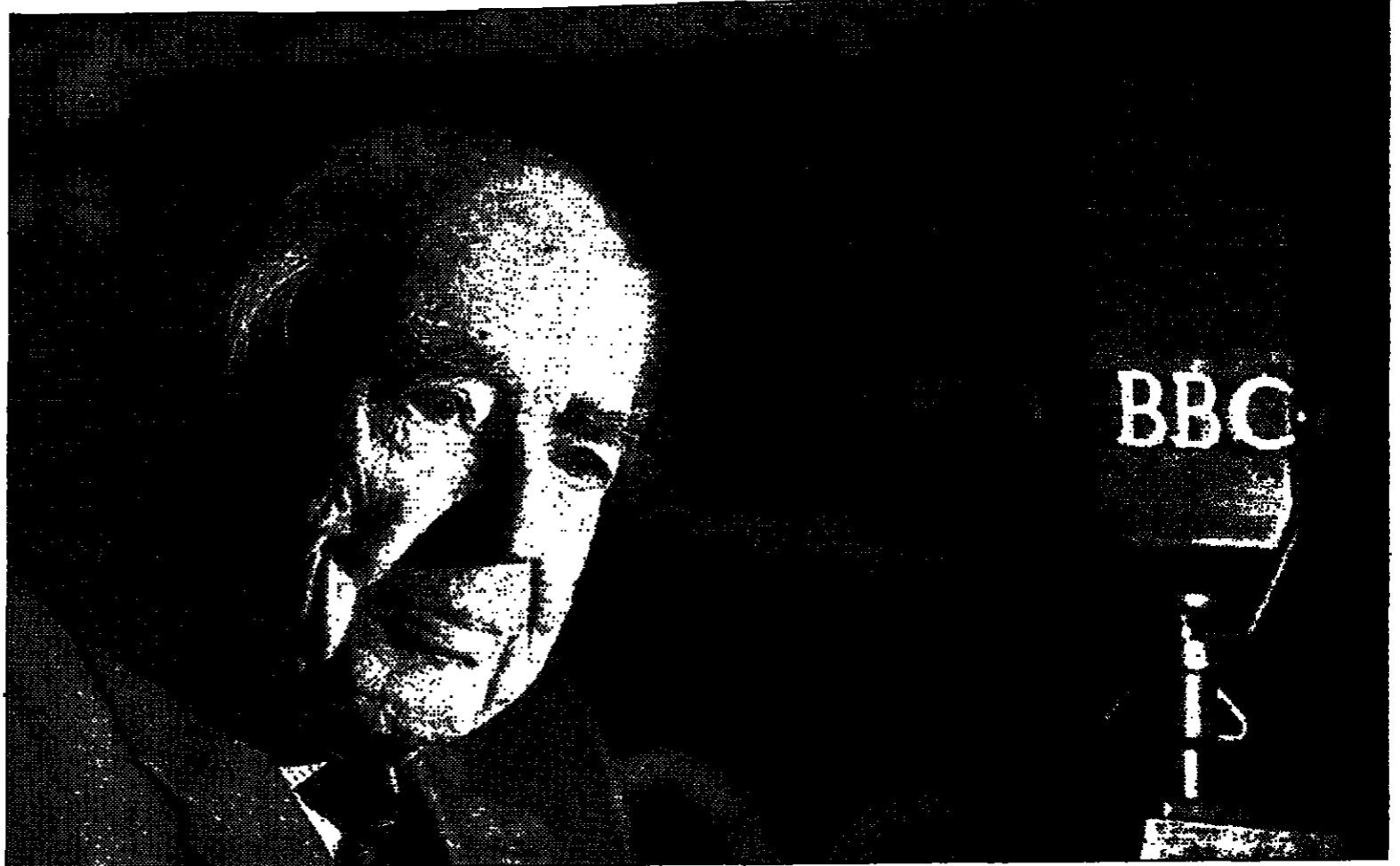
Snagge was being heard. During his early years the difficulties of moving a commentator behind a race for 4¼ miles was a significant spur for the development of short-range transmission.

Snagge quickly developed his own judgment without realising it. In the early days he used to gauge the distance between the crews at Duke's Meadows by reading two flags run up a pole on the bank. After several years he met the flagman in a pub and thanked him, joking that he didn't watch the flags any more because his own judgment was always proved right. "I should bloody well hope my flags are accurate," said the flagman, "do it from what you say on the wireless."

The Boat Race occupied little more than a day a year of Snagge's career on radio, although he also commented from Henley Royal Regatta. In 1952 he turned down the job of Controller for Northern Ireland and later became the BBC's head of presentation (sound) before retiring in 1965. However he continued to commentate on the rowing Blues until 1980. His best race was his last, when Oxford won by only a canvas when their bow man collapsed and turned them into a seven-man crew. There was drama, too, in 1952 when the BBC launch

broke down in a blinding snowstorm and narrowly avoided being rammed by pursuing steamers.

Snagge mistrusted recordings where everything could be done again if something went wrong. "I was born with a microphone in my mouth," he told me. "You cannot broadcast live. However experienced you are, without a butterfly in your stomach, you think 'So far, I've got



From D-Day to the Boat Race... John Snagge pictured during a return to Broadcasting House in February 1994

PHOTOGRAPH GARRY NEASE

with it... Is this going to be my Waterloo? I'm always nervous."

He had no awareness of his famous gaffe — that he couldn't see who was in the lead but it was either Oxford or Cambridge — until he listened to himself later. But he never dried up, not even when an accomplice did so, such as the Everest climber Tom Brocklebank. Asked to take over for a while at Ham-

mersmith, he said only: "As far as I am concerned, it's all over," and handed the microphone back to Snagge.

During his time as a commentator, Snagge presented a gold sovereign dating from 1829, the first year of the Boat Race, to the presidents to use for the toss. He located a mint sovereign at £75 and a used one at £25. When the dealer found out who he was and why he wanted the coin, he

offered to sell the mint one for the worth of its weight in gold at the current price if Snagge would take the gamble that it would come out at more than £75. Snagge paid just over £5 for it.

The coin caused a problem when Snagge decreed that the winning club would be responsible for keeping it until the next year. The Amateur Rowing Association pointed out that the Boat

Race victors would lose their amateur status if they kept the coin because they would have competed for a money prize. That is why the losing crew retains the coin each year.

Christopher Dodd

John Derrick Mordaunt Snagge, BBC news announcer and commentator, born May 8, 1904; died March 25, 1996

Senator Edmund Muskie

It all ended in tears

EDMUND SIXTH Muskie, who has died aged 81, was one of the tantalising might-have-beens of US presidential politics. He will be remembered for a moment of public tears and as a veteran Democratic Senator who may have been the real victim of President Nixon's Watergate machinations.

The tears and Watergate went together. In 1971-72 Senator Ed Muskie of Maine was by far the most serious Democratic challenger to Nixon's hopes of re-election. His campaign was accordingly targeted for an unpleasant form of guerrilla warfare by Nixon's dirty tricks division.

They forged letters in Muskie's name, spread foul rumours about his wife, disabled campaign cars, and rang conservative voters throughout the night using exaggerated African-American accents to say "This is Harlem for Muskie and we want you vote."

For the New Hampshire primary, where French-Canadians are an important voting minority, they distributed a forged Muskie letter which sneered at them as "dumb Canucks". Muskie, who had never faced anything this dirty in his political life, was so appalled by the attacks on his wife, who indeed had a drinking problem, particularly when they were published in the notoriously rightwing Manchester Union-Leader.

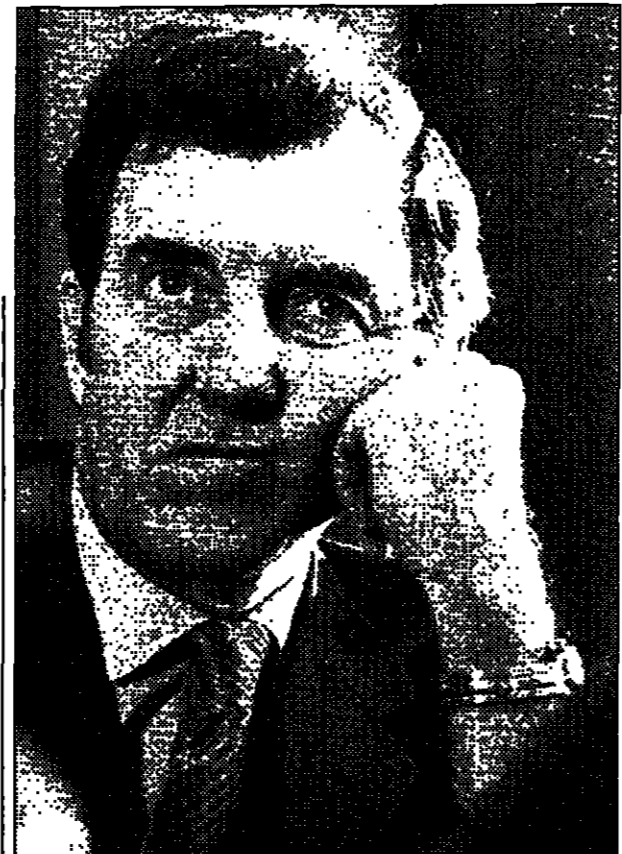
On the campaign trail in the snow, he broke down in tears as he defended her against a heckler in a moment caught by television that doomed his campaign. From his bizarre behaviour then and immediately afterwards, many on Muskie's campaign staff suspect to this day that LSD or some other drug was slipped into his coffee before he began speaking.

At least it provoked one of

Harold Macmillan's better quips. Macmillan liked Muskie, thought he would be president, and later commented that any British politician with experience of the House of Commons would have known how to deal with a heckler. "If somebody had shouted that my wife was a drunk, I'd have replied 'Yes, but you should have seen her Vietnam war, was able to ride his support among the students and the radical left all the way to the nomination — and to overwhelming defeat by Nixon."

Muskie might have done better. It is not easy to be sure. A man of craggy, slow-thinking and slow-talking integrity, he could be an impressive public speaker, but was not a gifted campaigner.

In 1968, when he made his name as vice-presidential running mate to Hubert Humphrey, his plain virtues shone in contrast to the garulous Nixon and the oleaginous crook Nixon chose as his running-mate, Spiro Agnew.



Edmund Muskie... bizarre behaviour aroused suspicions that his coffee had been spiked with LSD

neering record on environmental legislation. To party insiders, he had been Lyndon Johnson's loyal disciple since first being elected to the Senate in 1958. Although Muskie later claimed "private doubts" about the Vietnam war as early as 1966, in 1968 he stuck to the hawkish party platform.

Muskie, the son of Polish immigrants, was the first Roman Catholic to attend Bates College, a haven of the WASP aristocracy who could not get into Harvard or Yale. He then became the first Democrat to be elected Governor, and later Senator for the state of Maine, formerly so solidly Republican that it was one of only two states to vote against President Roosevelt in 1936.

Muskie became an elder statesman, available to fill the gap as secretary of state when Cyrus Vance resigned in protest in the last months of the Carter presidency.

When the Congress wanted a reliable hand to run the inquiry into the Iran-Contra affair, Muskie was the obvious candidate.

Always popular in Maine, Muskie suffered less than most defeated candidates after his presidential bid. His devoted aide, George Mitchell, inherited Muskie's Senate seat, and went on to become Senate majority leader — the post in which Muskie might have been most content. Muskie's foreign policy aide in the 1973 campaign, Tony Lake, is now national security adviser in the Clinton White House.

Martin Walker
Martin Walker served on Muskie's Senate and 1971 campaign staff as a Congressional Fellow of the American Political Science Association

Edmund Sixtus Muskie, politician, born March 28, 1914; died March 26, 1996

Appreciation: Mary Lavin

Ruralist writer who shone amid Dublin's bright lights

TO HER family Mary Lavin (*obituary, March 26*), was "Mud", an adored and unconventional mother who would always use a cheque from the New Yorker magazine or from a Guggenheim fellowship to pile her three small daughters into her Volkswagen Beetle and head for France or Italy.

To her literary friends she was an unassuming and deeply committed writer who seemed to have no sense of her own stature but who knew absolutely what she was about in her work. "I don't think a story should have a beginning, a middle and an end," she said. "To me it is more like an arrow in flight." She had little regard for critics but believed that writers should be their own severest critics. "Writers should read and re-read what they have written to find out what it is that they are trying to say."

On her first day as an arts student at University College Dublin she caught the eye of Michael MacDonald Scott, a handsome Australian who was also a Jesuit seminarian. "It was love at first sight," she said. "I was so into it that I had to get out of the country."

While still a student Mary wrote her first short story on the same year she married Virginia Woolf and sold it to Dublin magazine. Success followed immediately on the publication of her first collection of short stories, *Tales from Bective Bridge* in 1941.

After the death of her husband in 1954 she suffered a complete physical collapse and was taken to hospital. Told she could not go home until her weight improved,

she stuffed her pockets with stones to defy the weighing scales. It was this determination that not only got her back to her family but enabled her to recover from her loneliness sufficiently to launch herself on a literary career. But love and loneliness remained the central themes of her work.

She did most of her writing in Bewley's Oriental Cafe, where she worked all day until her daughters met her after school for an unorthodox family dinner. Money was always scarce, but never an issue. When an unexpected cheque for £300 arrived, she spent it on a mews in Dublin's Lad Lane, then a noted red light district. "There was nobody there but the prostitutes and they were very kind," Mary exclaimed with great pleasure.

In spite of precarious finances she became famous for her hospitality. She cut a distinctive figure, always dressed in black with a huge piece of silver or amber dangling on her bosom and her hair pulled back into a classical bun, gave memorable literary evenings where eminent writers mingled with (often) upcoming ones such as John McGahern and Paul Durcan.

On one of her excursions to Europe she met up again with Michael Scott, whom she had not seen for 20 years. In 1969, when she was 57, he obtained permission to leave the Jesuit Order and marry her, and Mary and "Mike" became a central part of Dublin's literary life until his death in 1988.

Like many New Yorker writers, she was sensitive about figures, always rejected and never offered them for publication elsewhere. She once told me she had a big heap of these stories under a bed. While I was editing a Dublin magazine I asked if I could have a look at them. At first she agreed, but later said no and instead gave me a rewrite of an early published story. "Do you often feel like re-writing what you've writ-

ten?" I asked. "If I could I would re-write every single line I ever wrote," she replied.

The author of several novels, she was best known for her short stories which appeared in numerous volumes as well as in a three-volume collected set published by Constable in 1985. She was the recipient of numerous Irish and American literary awards. Along with Samuel Beckett, she was made a *soeur*, the highest office of the Irish literary body, Acadama.

Claire Boylan

Brian Fallon writes: Mary Lavin had not been active as a writer for some years before her death, but there has been no dimming of her reputation as there has been with many or most Irish short-story writers of the generation which followed closely upon Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain.

From the late 1940s a vogue for the "rural" Irish short story was shrewdly exploited by publishers and magazine editors, especially the New Yorker which at one stage had a large number of Irish stories on its pages. However, with the exception of Lavin herself, Benedict Kiely and perhaps one or two more, these writers — whether living or not — have sunk into their period. Their work means little to younger Irish writers today and is unlikely to be revived.

Lavin was something more than a ruralist in the usual sense; there is an extra, imaginative, almost sinister dimension to her work which has made certain critics compare her with Flannery O'Connor. Her close links with America, which she kept up all her life, may largely explain this artistic parallel. In fact, America was a second home to her, even say, a first — home for her art, and she never carried a corresponding literary prestige in Great Britain.

Birthdays

Lord (Julian) Amery, veteran Conservative, 77; Mary Armour, painter, 85; Robert Bauman, chairman, British Aerospace, 63; Prof Alastair Bellingham, haematologist, president, Royal College of Pathologists, 58; Louis Blom-Cooper, QC, barrister, and author, 70; Lord Callaghan of Cardiff, former Labour prime minister, 84; Robert Cohen, dance director, founder artistic director, Contemporary Dance Trust, 71; Patrick Deuchar, chief executive, Royal Albert Hall, 47; Maria Ewing, opera singer, 46; Julian Glover, actor, 61; Duncan Goodhew, swimmer, 33; Eilery Hanley, rugby league footballer, 35; Mstislav Rostropovich, cellist, and conductor, 65; Admiral Sir Jock Slater, Chief of Naval Staff and First Sea Lord, 58; Quentin Tarantino, film director, 33; Frank Taylor, chief constable, Durham, 63; Cyrus Vance, US statesman and UN mediator, 79.

Death Notices

HAYWARD, Ron GALE, former general secretary of the Labour Party and secretary on Friday 22nd March peacefully at home in Birmingham, greatly missed by wife, daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Funeral at 10.30am, 29th April at The Old Rectory, Kingsley, 10, Kingsley Road, Kingsley, Birmingham B15 2JH. Donations if desired to the Phoenix Hospice, Mariner, 100, Kingsley Road, Kingsley, Birmingham B15 2JH. Friends who wish to contribute to the Phoenix Hospice should send their cheque to Phoenix Hospice, 100, Kingsley Road, Birmingham B15 2JH. Friends who wish to contribute to the Phoenix Hospice should send their cheque to Phoenix Hospice, 100, Kingsley Road, Birmingham B15 2JH.

MURPHY, Dorothy Christina (née Allen), on the 22nd of March my mother and wife of the late Arthur Edward Murphy, 84 years old. Friends who wish to contribute to the Phoenix Hospice should send their cheque to Phoenix Hospice, 100, Kingsley Road, Birmingham B15 2JH.

ROSS-HALLAM (née), on March 25th 1996 (aged 86 years) peacefully at home. She was the wife and friend of John Hallam (Jazz Musician). Friends who wish to contribute to the Phoenix Hospice should send their cheque to Phoenix Hospice, 100, Kingsley Road, Birmingham B15 2JH.

WILLIAMS, Dorothy Christina (née Allen), on the 22nd of March my mother and wife of the late Arthur Edward Williams, 84 years old. Friends who wish to contribute to the Phoenix Hospice should send their cheque to Phoenix Hospice, 100, Kingsley Road, Birmingham B15 2JH.

Memorial Services

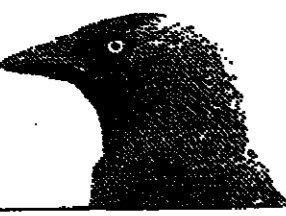
MR ROBERT STEPHENS, a celebration for the life and work of Sir Robert will be held on Monday 27th April 1996 at 11.30am at St. James's Church, 106 Piccadilly, London W1.

Births

MOORE, On the 13th March 1996 to the late Mrs. Margaret Moore a son, James Nathaniel Moore, a member for Augustus.

MO to place your announcement telephone 0171 733 4567 Fax 0171 733 4129.

Jackdaw



Jackie's clean

THE STORY is very simple in every Jackie Chan movie. I'm the good guy; then there's the bad guy. Then you see us do the comedy stunts and fighting. I can say my films are not violent, but they're not very, very violent like American movies. We have a lot of action, but not a lot of blood. No dirty words come from my mouth. I have a girlfriend in my films, but no make-love scenes. Always bad guy either die or go to jail, because in Asia so many children come to see my movies. Parents say, "Learn from Jackie. See what Jackie is doing in the movies. See what

Jackie's doing in public." So my image is very important. Sometimes I'd like to play the bad guy and sometimes I'd like to die in a movie. But all the film buyers from Korea and Japan say, "No Jackie can't play the bad guy, Jackie can't die!"

If I have Japanese bad guy, I use some Japanese good guy. If I have Caucasian bad guy, I have Caucasian good guy. If you want to be an international star, you must create good production, not make local films with only local jokes. Airplane! was very famous in America, but not very successful in Asia. Maybe my movies cannot get awards, but they're more successful than things like The Colour Purple, which gets awards, but only few audiences like it. But ya know what? ET is the best movie in the world. For me, what is a bad movie? Nobody sees it, that's a bad movie. That's my philosophy. First time you see one of my movies, you will remember — then you will continue to come see my movies. Every movie I do must be good. I love to work because I

learn. I see many big stars becoming very rich, but suddenly they're very poor because they are gambling. OK, I'm not gambling. I save all my money. I'm very happy. I have my Jackie Chan stunt team. If I stop working, what about them? So I must always be working. On the set, I'm kind of like the king of the set. When we're finished, when everybody has gone home, it's myself. Where do I go? I stay in my office, watch my videos. Chinese action hero Jackie Chan discloses the secret of his success to Howard Feinstein for *InterView*.

Private morals
SOCIETY IS full of paradoxes. Technologically, the world has shrunk, but the process of globalisation seems only to remind us how divided and fragmented we are. Now we have so many of the things we wanted, we have forgotten the point. And in a world where the norm was to try to be modern, we find that modernism is becoming out of date... Consumerist pragmatism holds sway in many of our Western democracies... One of the themes I have returned to again and again since becoming archbishop is my concern about the dangers inherent in the privatisation of morality. A society that loses its commitment to certain core moral values becomes one in which everyone does what is right in their own eyes. And post-modernism rejects absolute ways of speaking of truth. As Professor Lyotard says: "I define post-modernism as incredulity towards meta-narratives." This tendency pushes religion and morality out of the public arena into the private domain. But to claim for all its citizens a morality which ends up being no freedom at all. If there is no point of reference beyond myself or beyond yourself, then reason, justice and law become exploitable by the powerful and the influential, and the weak have nothing left to appeal to. If we have no word for sin we shall soon find we have no words

left to describe responsibility. As the ancient Roman adage puts it: "What are laws without morals?"

The Pope expressed the sharp dilemma this causes. When morality is privatised, almost the only moral principle that is held in common is that of "autonomy". Each must choose on the basis of his or her individual rational will — that is the secular, her moral philosopher's dream — without any recourse to tradition or convention. Yet the Pope rightly points out that many social scientists have been arguing for years that individuals are, in many respects, not free to choose — their lives and ideas are largely determined. So we have the dilemma that individual choice becomes the hallmark of modern (or rather post-modern) morality, yet individual choice is in fact severely circumscribed. All we seem to be left with is a rather bleak and despairing relativism.

George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, makes a plea for core moral values in the Catholic weekly *The Tablet*.

Loco madness

"IT'S A LAUGH" says the man who will give his name only as "DB". It's a laugh thinking about the sad people in anoraks staying on the platform and keeping to the rules, while I'm track-side and naked. "DB" spends time posing naked by train tracks with his mate, Jessie, because he is what is known in train-spotting circles as a "gricer" — a hardcore locomotive fanatic who will stop



Jackie don't... Interview

at nothing to catch his prey. Gricers are perhaps best described as the punks of train-spotting. They are locomotive fans who have added an anti-establishment (anti-BR) spin to their pastime by secluding themselves in the more remote collecting of electric passenger trains, opting instead to take photographs of the big, sexy diesel engines that thunder along inaccessible freight lines in the dead of night... The trouser-dropping is a ritual, and the gricer is in the depot and has photographed the trains, he often drops his trousers in front of the train while his friend snaps him. It's seen as a laddish, gloating gesture of triumph over the authorities who would come between the people and their trains.

Dawn Gill tracks down the punk train-spotting, the Gricers, for the Face.

agrees that a breach of this agreement by Computer City will damage Robert Beken and that these damages may be pursued in court. Further, that these damages for the first breach are \$1,000. The deposit of this cheque for payment is agreement with these terms and conditions. An improvised contract written on the back of a cheque by Bob Beken, a customer in the American chain of shops, Computer City, owned by Tandy. Beken had noticed an assistant typing his name and address into a computer. He later received four mail shots from Computer City and wrote two letters of protest, but received no response. Beken won \$1,000 plus costs from the company in a small claims court. Unearthed by New Scientist.

Jackdaw wants your jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk, fax 0171-733-4566, Jackie Chan. The Guardian, 11, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Dan Glaister

visions
4bn
take a kill
and take the
rent Exp
hammer
the Inb

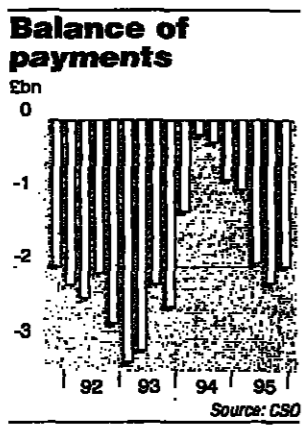
Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian

£4bn EU bill blow to trade

Richard Thomas and Larry Elliott

A RECORD £4 billion payment to Brussels helped push Britain's balance of payments deeper into the red last year, according to government officials.



by the European Union, the Central Statistical Office disclosed that the UK had to foot the bill for the continent's economic slowdown last year. Balance of payments figures showed that the extra contributions to EU coffers helped widen the gap between imports and exports from £2.1 billion in 1994 to £6.7 billion in 1995. Treasury officials, aware of the simmering resentment felt towards Brussels by Conservative Eurosceptics, insisted the transfer to the European Union would be offset by some repayment this year. This rebate is expected to be between £750 million and £1 billion, but will not make up for the virtual doubling of the EU payment from the £2.1 billion recorded in 1995.

Yesterday's figures also underlined how the strengthening economic performance by Germany and France — two of Britain's biggest trading partners — led to a deterioration in the UK's visible trade balance in food, manufactured goods, oil, raw materi-

als from £10.8 billion to £11.6 billion last year. Europe's blanket ban on British beef could add a further £1.5 billion to the deficit this year as a result of a slump in exports and a rise in imports, City analysts believe. Treasury officials were sanguine about yesterday's data, describing the effect of the EU contribution as a one-off and insisting that the underlying

current account picture remained positive. A spokesman said that, 1994 apart, last year's outturn was the best performance since 1987. He added that the 1995 gap was almost exactly in line with last November's budget forecast of a £5.5 billion shortfall. The deterioration of the trade position in goods was offset by a better performance by Britain's service sector —

where the City and the impact of the low pound on tourism helped lift the surplus from £4.7 billion to £5.7 billion. The pattern for 1995 was not reproduced in the final three months of the year, when the overall balance of payments deficit fell from £2.1 billion to £1.8 billion. This was the result of a decline in the visible trade deficit from £3.6 billion to £2.8 billion and a drop in the sur-

Notebook Skating over political points



Edited by Alex Brummer

THE marketing of the Railtrack share offer always was going to be a much more low-key affair than some of its predecessors. The political risk is particularly acute given the Labour Party's reaction to whether it will take it back into public ownership/control when it takes office. That will hopefully be clarified by a statement of intent in the pathfinder prospectus on April 15. Some investors may also be more cautious because of recent privatisation history when almost immediately after the sale of the Government's remaining stakes in PowerGen and National Power, the electricity regulators have announced a price review, sending the shares of the generators below their offer price.

consider emulating Mrs Thatcher's successful stand at Fontainebleau in 1984, which was based on a simple philosophy: Give Us Our Money Back. Yesterday the Government was handed the perfect weapon for pursuing this approach. The Central Statistical Office said that in 1995 the UK made a net payment of £4.1 billion to the European Commission — almost double 1994's contribution and an all-time record. "The criteria for assessing contributions are the rate of economic growth and government receipts from indirect taxes. And although the UK's expansion of 2.5 per cent last year looks anaemic by comparison to 1994's boom growth of 4 per cent, it was still better than the struggling economies of many of our European partners. As a result, our share of the cost of institutions such as the European Court and programmes like the Common Agricultural Policy shot up. The UK is likely to get some money back during the course of 1996 — Treasury insiders are hoping for £750 million — because of an underspend in the total EC budget. But the increase in the size of the UK's transfer to the EU has already damaged the UK's balance of payments deficit, which is rising for 1995 — a three-fold increase on the previous year. With the beef ban expected to send Britain's trade a further £1.5 billion into the red, even without any slaughter policy concessions from Europe seems a reasonable demand.

Make a killing and take the Orient Express

Keith Harper Transport Editor

DISCOUNT vouchers on the Orient Express and 25 model railway engines were yesterday paraded as the more unusual inducements to encourage individuals to buy shares in the Railtrack flotation due at the end of May. The Government's £5 million marketing campaign was launched last night in a series of television and newspaper advertisements which will run for two months. The pathfinder prospectus will be published on April 15, after which Railtrack's senior management team will embark on an intensive selling programme, including to key international investors. Some 110 banks, building societies and stockbrokers have been appointed as share shops, providing more than 10,000 high-street outlets. Each outlet will be able to make special offers to people registering with them. The offers, which also in-

clude a trip to Disneyland near Paris via Eurostar, are in the form of prize draws. The Government wanted to be more generous to individual punters by offering a train travel, but the idea was ruled out after considerable investigation because of hostility among the private operating companies. The share offer stresses that at least 51 per cent of the Government's shares in Railtrack will be for sale. The Government wants to dispose of the entire company, originally valued at £5.4 billion, but now downgraded to around £2 billion. It rejected suggestions last night that the City was going cold on the plan, even though potential investors will not be told that the business will have to rely on public subsidies to make a return. The offer will be structured in two parts: a UK public offer targeted at retail investors, who will be offered at least 30 per cent of shares, and an international tender offer aimed primarily at institutional investors in the UK and worldwide.

No spending please, we're British

Consumers are squirrelling cash into savings accounts rather than splashing out in the high street, casting a shadow over government hopes of retail-led growth, writes Richard Thomas.

As a result, officials sharply revised up their estimate of the "savings ratio" — the proportion of income saved — from 8.6 per cent to 10.4 per cent for the third quarter and 10.5 per cent for the last three months of 1995. Jonathan Loynes, UK economist at HSBC Markets, said: "The pushing up of the savings ratio suggests consumers are still relatively cautious. This emphasises the need for lower base rates if the Government's growth target is to be met."

figures from the Central Statistical Office yesterday. Personal disposable incomes were 0.7 per cent higher in the last three months of 1995 than in the preceding quarter, but consumer spending rose only 0.5 per cent. As a result, officials sharply revised up their estimate of the "savings ratio" — the proportion of income saved — from 8.6 per cent to 10.4 per cent for the third quarter and 10.5 per cent for the last three months of 1995.

The CSO also revised down estimates of investment spending for 1995, from a 1.2 per cent rise to a 0.7 per cent fall over the previous year, reflecting the weakness in housing and construction. Treasury officials were disappointed with the investment dip — the first since 1992 — but said firms were continuing to spend on plant and equipment.

Flying winger delivers lucrative parting shot to United



Everton gain... but United made £5 million from Kanchelskis sale PHOTOGRAPH: DAN SMITH

MANCHESTER United followed its rise to the top of the Premiership with financial results yesterday which confirmed the club's status in a commercial league of its own, writes Roger Cooke. It has £7 million to back spending to strengthen the squad. It boasts one of the top Internet sites and claims to be the biggest catering venue outside London. Despite lower sales in the first half of the year because of stadium rebuilding, the company produced six-month profits more than double the previous year. Lower operating profits were offset by exceptional gains from commercial deals and from the sale of players, notably Ukrainian winger Andrei Kanchelskis, sold to Everton for £5 million last summer. As a result, pre-tax profits rose from £7.3 million to £15.3 million, on sales down from £36 million to just under £30 million. The interim dividend is to be increased by 14 per cent to 1.6p per share. The contrast sharply with Millwall, another football club quoted on the stock market but languishing in the middle of the First Division. Its half-year sales reached almost £2 million, equivalent to the takings from two league matches at Old Trafford. Millwall reported a loss before tax of £375,000 despite more than £1 million in transfer profits but unlike United, whose diversification is limited to football-related media and merchandise, plans to develop into communications and leisure activities. Graham Robson, former chief executive of Dalgety Consumer Food Group, has joined as chief executive of the holding company, charged with identifying suitable acquisitions. Roger Cooke is a Manchester United shareholder.

IMF bale out

THE decision by the IMF's executive board to approve a \$10.2 billion (£6.5 billion) new standing credit with Russia — ahead of June's presidential election — is certain to be seen in some quarters as a vote for Boris Yeltsin. Although the exceptional terms, requiring monthly monitoring of its Russian economy, mean that the IMF has not necessarily been that lenient. The loan, coming after several other big credits including that to Mexico, will however start to stretch the IMF's resources. This makes it all the more important that new reserve-rich countries, such as those of East Asia, are rapidly brought into the IMF's borrowing arrangements; the progress is made on establishing a future role for the IMF's currency, the SDR, and that shareholders move with some speed towards a major increase in the IMF's capital resources.

Mercury Asset Management has asked us to point out that its only purchase of Securicor stock this year was a small further investment in the company's 4.55 per cent cumulative participating preference shares on 20 January. We are pleased to correct any suggestion that MAM topped up its holdings in Securicor in anticipation of changes in the company's share structure.

Minister refuses to come clean

ENERGY Minister Tim Eggar yesterday infuriated Labour by sidestepping demands to spell out the full costs of cleaning up nuclear power stations as he fought to fend off calls for the £2.6 billion privatisation to be scrapped, writes Rebecca Smithers. During a heated debate on the sell-off, Mr Eggar refused to detail the industry's liabilities for decommissioning stations and cleaning up waste. Shadow trade and industry secretary Margaret

Beckett claimed the nuclear sell-off was one of the Government's "most reckless gambles" and the taxpayer would have to pick up much of the final bill for shutting the stations down. But Mr Eggar fought back by telling MPs: "The Labour Party are members of a unique club, a unique club of two. The new Labour Party joins with North Korea as the only political movements who are still opposed to privatisation in any form and in any circumstances."

Hammer bangs on the Internet

Mark Tran in New York

AFORMER West Ham trainee footballer has decided to float free in cyberspace. Andrew Klein's pioneering Spring Street Brewery was the first American company to make a public offering of its shares on the Internet. Now it has made another breakthrough by winning approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission to have its shares traded in cyberspace. The company made history in February when it used the WorldWide Web to raise \$1.6 million in an initial public offering without having to pay a penny to underwriters. It followed up that pioneering

move by creating a cyberspace market for its shares. Mr Klein's successful use of the Internet to raise money has generated intense interest among other entrepreneurs. Mr Klein, who trained with West Ham football club in 1980 before becoming a securities lawyer and then a brewer, said he had received about 100 enquiries from companies and would-be entrepreneurs interested in tapping the Internet. "We attracted a significant number of our 3,500 shareholders by creatively harnessing the power of the Internet," he said. "It was simply a natural progression to develop a digital trading mechanism by which these shareholders could realise liquidity if they so desire."

Brunei royals set to buy George V

George V, but during last year's takeover battle, Forte had its entire Exclusive hotel chain valued at \$910 million.

The Sultan's love of luxury hotels is well known. He already owns London's Dorchester Hotel, and last year was reported as having offered £200 million to Forte, then owner of the neighbouring Grosvenor House Hotel. But last night, sources close to the Sultan played down any suggestion that a deal involving the George V was imminent. The Sultan has avoided publicity since suggestions in the mid-1980s that he had helped finance Moham-

med Al-Fayed's controversial takeover of House of Fraser. However, insiders believe he was closely involved in last November's £240 million acquisition of royal jewellers Asprey by his younger brother, Prince Jefri Bolkiah. Bruce Jones, leisure and hotel analyst at broker Merrill Lynch, said the Sultan could easily outbid most hotel companies for the George V. He added: "The Sultan is able to take a much longer view than most pils can, but if he is interested, it would suggest that Granada may not be able to sell the Exclusives as a block." Meanwhile, American

hotel group Marriott is understood to be best placed to buy Granada's Meridian and Exclusive hotels. Although other leading hoteliers, including Bass, ITC-Sheraton and French group Accor are also believed to have approached Granada, Marriott is still thought to be the front-runner. Last night, no one from Marriott's head office was available for comment. Meanwhile, former Forte boss, Sir Rocco Forte, has recruited David Pasca, formerly finance director at MAT's money and securities broking division, as his acquisition team's new financial director.

Trade beef

HARASSED British officials trying to squeeze cash out of Brussels bureaucrats to compensate for the beef trade ban might

Chemist hints at new formula

veiled a 12 per cent increase in full year pre-tax profits, to £49.4 million, Mr Harris said he was still "extremely surprised" at the referral.

He added: "After we get a favourable decision from the MMC, we will reset the bid based on a consideration of Lloyds' bid to take us. It's been kicked in both for now, but we are neck and neck, no doubt about that." Mr Harris said Unichem, which snapped up 9.9 per cent of Lloyds in a market raid before the MMC referral, still had the advantage. He said: "Gebe bid more, but we had the sentiment of the City and pharmaceuticals people behind us." "However, Gebe — whose bid for Lloyds reaches its first closing date today — immediately poured scorn on Mr Harris's remarks, insisting that it was still in pole position to win Lloyds. A spokesman said: "Ours is the only bid on the table at the moment." Unichem shares closed down 1p at 245p.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 1.30	France 7.44	Italy 2.25	Singapore 2.10
Austria 15.20	Germany 2.1675	Malta 0.54	South Africa 5.16
Belgium 46.05	Greece 381.00	Netherlands 2.455	Spain 182.50
Canada 2.01	Hong Kong 11.56	New Zealand 2.185	Sweden 9.95
Cyprus 0.6975	India 52.04	Norway 9.54	Switzerland 1.76
Denmark 2.45	Ireland 0.555	Portugal 228.00	Turkey 92.00
Finland 6.94	Israel 4.72	Saudi Arabia 5.96	USA 1.4850

12 FINANCE AND ECONOMICS

Halifax stacks up £1.1bn despite a dire market

Borrowers desert UK's biggest building society...

Teresa Hunter

B RITAIN'S biggest building society, the Halifax, yesterday announced profits of £1.1 billion last year despite a dire market, in which lending fell and house moves dropped to their lowest level for 21 years.

The mortgage lenders, which unveiled agreed plans to buy mutual insurer Clerical Medical on Monday, underlined its change of strategy by declaring it would no longer rely on the housing market as the main motor of increased profits.

Following its merger with the Leeds Permanent, the Halifax is in the process of converting to a bank and the flotation is expected to proceed in the summer.

Its chairman, Jon Foulds, predicted that the dismantling of the welfare state would continue, forcing people to provide for their own financial security.

He said: "With an ageing population and diminishing welfare state, accumulating personal wealth will become much more important. As people become disaffected with housing they will increasingly switch from physical to financial assets."

"We see clear indications of

strong growth in UK personal savings and investments and Halifax is best-placed to become the key financial institution for accumulating and managing personal wealth in the next generation.

Mr Foulds said that last year banking and personal loans provided better business growth than the mortgage market, where the bad debt charge of £107 million was little changed from the previous year.

The society's net lending fell from £3.8 billion in 1994-95 to £2.8 billion, although its share of the market remained steady at 19 per cent, against a background of a 20 per cent fall in overall net lending in the UK.

The Halifax is cautiously optimistic that the housing market is showing signs of improvement, and it expects house prices to rise by 2 per cent by the end of the year, with transactions up 10 per cent.

Mr Foulds said: "The Halifax House Price Index has now shown increases in seven successive months and there are strong indications from Halifax Estate Agents of renewed buyer interest. The housing boom is likely, but — based on firm foundations of rising real incomes, low house prices and historically low mortgage costs —

we expect this recovery to continue."

Assets grew to £99 billion following the merger with the Leeds — which cost £113 million — and the acquisition of BNP Mortgages.

The Halifax confirmed its interest in acquiring another building society, and the Woolwich, which itself plans to float next year, is thought to be a good match.

Mr Foulds said: "We are asked sometimes why the conversion process appears to be taking so long. It must be remembered that Halifax and the Leeds both decided that their correct strategy was to merge followed then by the conversion of the combined society."

"This two-stage process was inevitably going to take longer than a simple conversion."

The society's interest margin — the gap between the saving and borrowing rate — increased slightly following the Leeds merger from 2.18 per cent in 1994-95 to 2.18 per cent.

The chief executive, Mike Blackburn, said that the Halifax would compete with any mortgage rates which were being offered by societies which had begun to redistribute profits as part of their commitment to remaining as mutuals.

... Bovis Homes to be sold ...

P&O to steer a tighter course as profits slip

Outlook

Pauline Springgett

THE shipping and property group, P&O, made all the right noises yesterday as far as the City was concerned. The eye-catcher was the announcement that it plans to float Bovis Homes next year.

This was part of a package which suggests that P&O is about to be steered on a much tighter course. Lord Sterling, the chairman, said he was simply being more open about his intentions than he has in the past.

The other main planks of the strategy are to sell £500 million of property assets by the end of 1998, to reduce investment in bulk shipping and to focus the group on fewer international divisions.

Lord Sterling, unveiling a 6 per cent decline in pre-tax

profits last year to £320.1 million, said his priority is to improve the group's return on capital from 11 per cent to 15 per cent.

The decision to float Bovis Homes, whose book value is £300 million, was inevitable given P&O's increasing reliance on construction operations. The domestic house building division sits uneasily with the rest of the group.

The big question, apart from the eventual price tag, is whether yesterday's announcement will smoke out any bidders.

The decision to sell some of the company's property portfolio was flagged earlier this year. Lord Sterling's argument is that, although the international operations are performing well, it remains larger than usual because the property market has been in recession.

The company argues that the market has been improving slightly, opening the door for some sales. Cynics might say that some of the property

portfolio needs some money spent on it and are overdue. But the fact that sales have started — £100 million has been netted so far this year — is still welcome.

This may all bode well for the future but the fact is that P&O was badly hit in 1995 by competition from Eurotunnel and the continued low rates in the containers business which saw its profits fall by 35 per cent to £40.9 million, a decline almost matched by the ferries division where profits fell by 34 per cent to £74.8 million.

Lord Sterling was pulling no punches yesterday. There was fierce competition among the cross-Channel ferry operators and Eurotunnel for customers in 1995 will be a difficult year as rates remain under pressure," he said, adding that P&O reduced its rates by just over 10 per cent last year.

On the plus side, the cross-Channel market in 1995 was hit by freight grew by 25 per cent last year and the start to 1996 has been good. Passengers have been spending more on board.

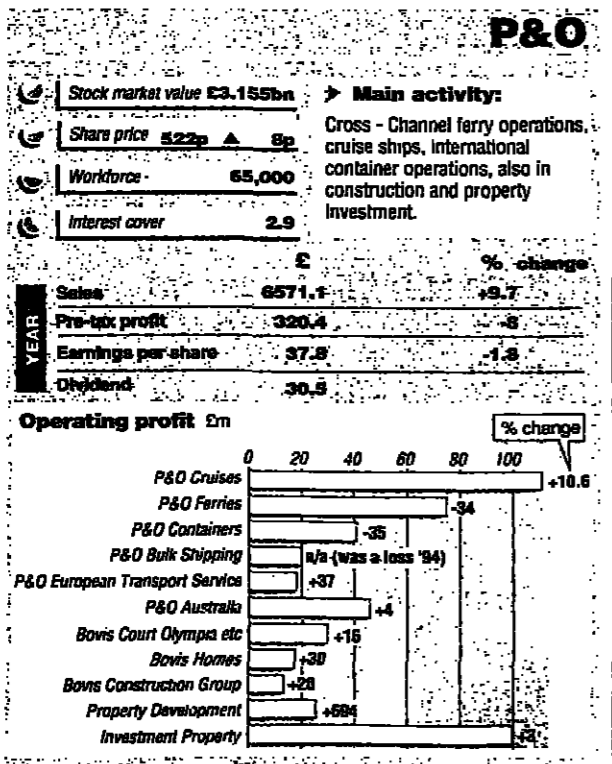
As Eurotunnel's capacity is stretched, P&O hopes to pick up some overspill business.

The containers business is also intensely competitive and rates are very low. To tackle this P&O has signed a deal to form from June an alliance with the main German operator, Hapag-Lloyd, Neptune Orient Lines of Singapore, and Nippon Yusen Kaisha of Japan.

Lord Sterling said the containers business was changing almost out of recognition. There would be close alliances, with companies increasingly sharing facilities, possibly even the containers themselves. "We intend to be proactive," he said.

But the bottom line is that the containers division produces only a 6 per cent return on capital. If Lord Sterling falls to raise that to 15 per cent in the next three years, the company may well decide to pull out of containers.

Incidentally, it should be clear that the 2,000 job losses referred to in yesterday's Outlook have already taken place.



... but City detects recovery

Taylor made £46m

Tony May

S HARES of Taylor Woodrow rose by as much as 8 per cent yesterday when the City sensed that the group was over the worst of the recession in construction. Profits fell 9.4 per cent to £48 million last year after the group spent £8.3 million on restructuring its construction division, losing 316 jobs.

But the group's shares rose 11p to 149p — close to a high for the year — after chairman Colin Parsons said strong second-half trading, plus buoyant international markets, had given the board enough confidence to raise the final dividend by 50 per

cent to 2.25p. He said the improved outlook owed much to the group's switch to trading overseas. In 1995, more than 60 per cent of profits were generated from operations outside the UK, with a particularly strong performance coming from the US and other international construction businesses.

The dividend rise followed five years of sluggish shareholder returns and Mr Parsons said the performance was not good enough. In particular he cited the need for a "substantial improvement" in the group's UK contracting business.

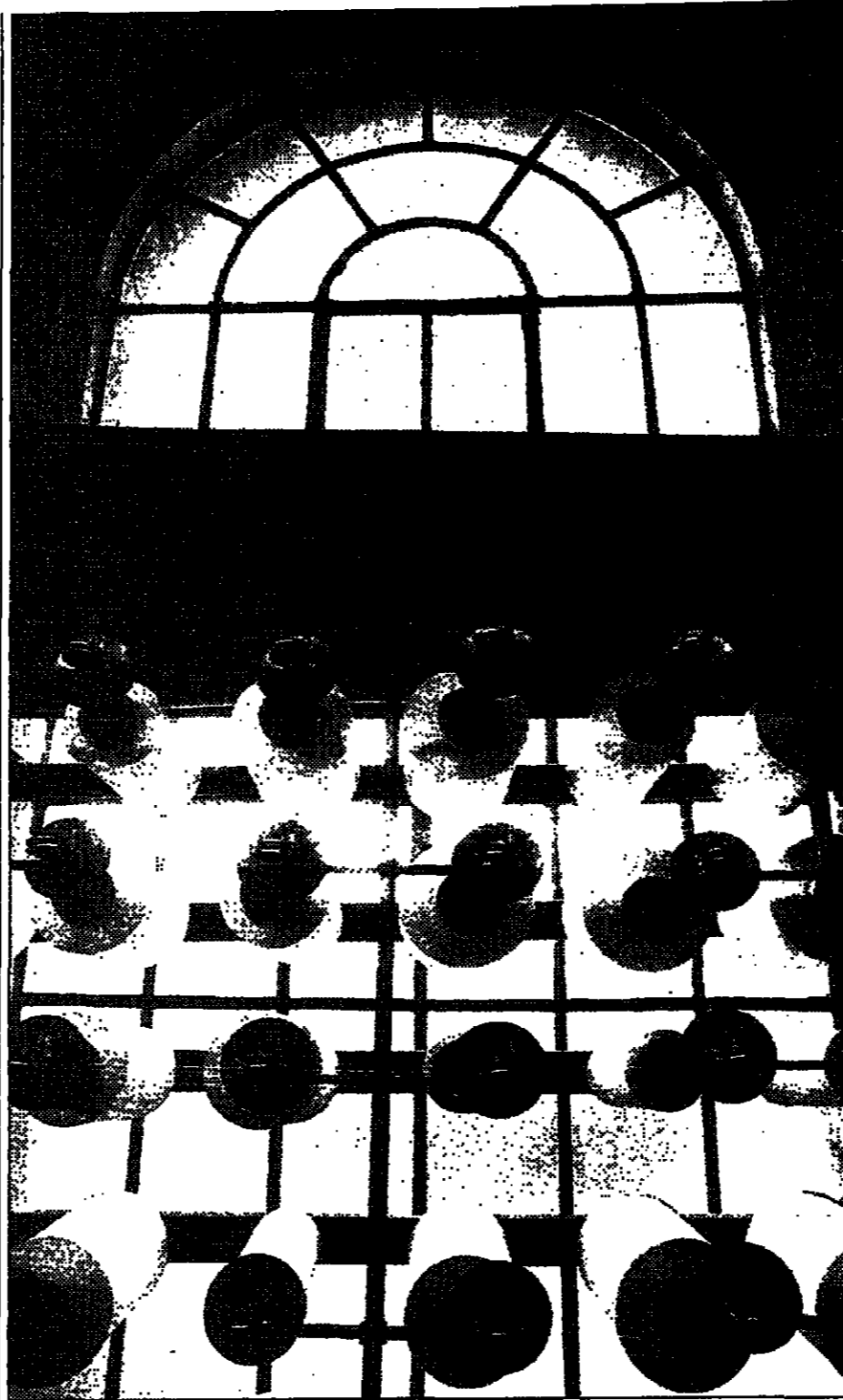
The division is not likely to move into profit this year but should pare back 1995's losses

of £8.9 million and no further heavy loss of jobs is expected.

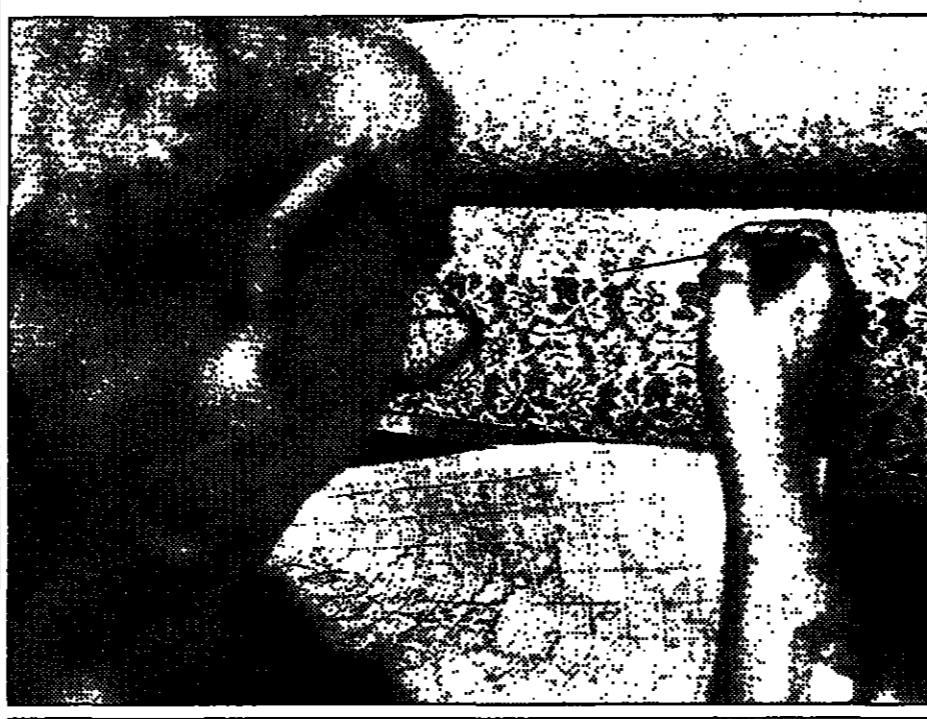
Mr Parsons said the group was committed to construction in Britain only where it offered well-priced business such as building football stadia and healthcare premises. This year should be a better one for the UK contracting market but he did not see significant progress.

"The industry still needs more people shaken out. There will be more bankruptcies. We don't intend to be one of them," he said.

All other group divisions raised their profits last year and margins improved in housebuilding where the group expects to meet its 1996 target of 1,300 in the UK.



Fine work... Nottingham's John Gamble Manufacturing, 124 years in business, uses traditional machinery and processes — such as the bobbins (above) and checking for quality (below) — to make Leavers lace for goods ranging from bridalwear to handkerchiefs. PHOTOGRAPHS: JOHN AMESON



News in brief

Boots poised to boost German group profits

BASF, the German chemicals and pharmaceuticals group, expects earnings this year to be "of the same magnitude" as those of 1995, its chairman, Dr Jürgen Strube, said yesterday. Pharmaceuticals, with a full-year contribution from Boots and lower restructuring costs, is likely to show an improvement but areas like basic and industrial chemicals and textile dyes may find it tougher to live up to last year's performance.

In 1995, BASF produced record sales of DM46.2 billion (£20.5 billion) while profits before tax were DM4.1 billion — almost double the previous year's figure. That performance was achieved despite the strength of the German mark, particularly against the United States dollar, which knocked around DM1.3 billion of the sales figures. — *Mark Milner in Ludwigshafen*

Branson may return to music

RICHARD Branson's Virgin Group yesterday confirmed it may return to the music business nearly four years after selling the Virgin record label to Thorn EMI. A spokesman said Mr Branson had "spoken to a number of people in the industry, and he's decided we're going to look at it. I think over the next six months we'll shake out what we're going to do."

Virgin sold the record label on which the conglomerate was founded for £560 million in June 1992, while Branson remained as its chairman for the 35 months during which he had committed himself not to launch a rival label. Virgin last week recruited Jeremy Pearce, managing director of Sony's/European music licensing division, reportedly to help him explore the possibility of launching a new label. — *Excel*

Iceland to branch out

FROZEN food specialists Iceland reported a 3 per cent rise in pre-tax profit to £78 million and hinted at diversification following the failure last autumn of a joint takeover bid for the Littlewoods store group. Chairman and chief executive Malcolm Walker said: "We will continue to evaluate other appropriate options for the development of the group in the light of our strong cash generating powers."

The company last year celebrated its 25th anniversary and its 7600th store. A silver jubilee marketing campaign in the autumn prompted a turn-around in sales, with the second half of the year producing 5 per cent higher sales on a comparable store basis. In the first half year sales were 3.5 per cent lower. — *Roger Couss*

US plant creates 267 jobs

AMERICAN electronics company Photronics is to invest £47 million in a new plant at Trafford Park, Manchester, creating 267 jobs. The plant, which will form the company's European headquarters, will produce photomasks, a vital component in the production of semi-conductor chips. The investment was supported by a £5 million assistance package from the Government and regional agencies. Construction of office and production facilities is expected to be completed this year. — *Martyn Halsall*

Women bring more sex bias cases as job worries grow

WORKFACE/Martyn Halsall reports on record unfair dismissal hearings as workers face losing tribunal rights

MORE and more women are taking their employers to industrial tribunals in their fight against sexual discrimination at work, and some are coming away with payments of up to £150,000.

As the number of women at work steadily increases, the latest figures from conciliation group Acas show that there has been a near 10 per cent rise in sex discrimination cases to 5,506 — signalling women's readiness to use the law.

This has been highlighted recently by Christine Eplin, a 48-year-old mother of two who received £120,000, plus a £20,000 contribution to her pension, from the Brighton-based clothing firm QS Familywear, which she claimed paid more to a male colleague doing an equivalent job. Her employers had denied sexual discrimination but ended up paying what is believed to be the highest award at an equal pay hearing.

Other recent cases included a £150,000 award against a member of the RAF, dismissed for becoming pregnant, and a woman awarded £18,000 by a City firm on grounds of discrimination and unfair dismissal.

The figures from the Acas survey, which show record claims against unfair dismissals during the past year, have also led to a new row over employment rights. The row follows ministerial proposals, leaked three weeks ago, which could exclude unfair dismissal claims from 90 per cent of British firms.

Up to 10 million workers could lose the right to take their grievances to tribunals if these controversial proposals — promulgated by Michael Heseltine but attacked from within the cabinet — ever became law. The Prime Minister, anxious to regain the support of small businesses for the Conservatives, has conspicuously left the issue open.

Yesterday's figures, which showed cases had increased by 15 per cent to 91,568, were seized on by the Labour Party as fresh evidence of the "growing job insecurity" threatening British workers.

"Ministers have res-

ponded to the figures by increasing their efforts to find ways of discouraging people from implementing unfair dismissal and other industrial tribunal cases," Labour stated.

Michael Meacher, shadow employment secretary, forecast even heavier caseloads. He said: "Since John Major became prime minister, 10.5 million people have suffered one or more periods of unemployment and since the last election there has been no rise at all in full-time or permanent employment."

"Instead of trying to find ingenious new ways of putting people off claiming their legal rights, the government should be trying to fight the job insecurity epidemic. Their plans for industrial tribunals are likely to make matters worse."

Increasing fears over job security were masking attempts to create a "feel-good factor", the report said. "Undoubtedly there is still a feeling of insecurity," said Acas chairman John Boswell.

Industrial tribunal cases have more than trebled since 1989, when there were 29,304 applications. Some two-thirds never reach a hearing, being settled privately with the help of Acas or simply dropped. Hearings, however, have risen 178 per cent since 1989.

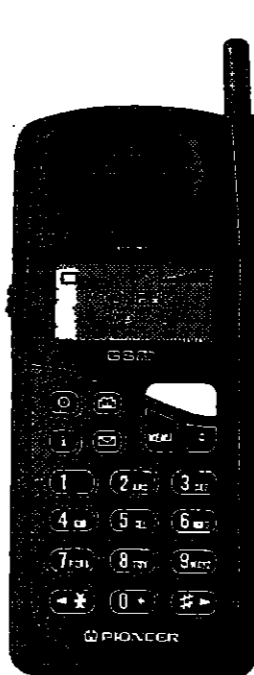
Yesterday's figures in Acas's annual report showed half the total complaints concerned unfair dismissal allegations. The largest rises occurred in the North-west, with a 33 per cent annual increase, followed by Scotland and the Northern region.

"People are becoming more and more aware of the fact that they have the right to go to a tribunal," said Mr Houghman.

Unions were also taking more cases to tribunals to highlight individual issues but some employers, particularly those managing small and medium-sized companies, claim the greater freedom for lawyers to advertise their services has influenced the growing number of cases. There have been allegations of solicitors "ambulance chasing" dissatisfied employees into hearings.

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Women... more sex... cases as... worries gro...



Blazing along... Cigar has his final pre-World Cup center

Racing

Cigar can light up the showdown in the sand

Chris Hawkins sets the scene for the Dubai World Cup, the richest race ever

IT IS said that Sheikh Mohammed won't have much change out of £3 million once the desert dust has settled on today's Dubai World Cup, but members of his organising committee have been told it would be rather vulgar to divulge any actual figures.

What we do know is that he has flown in over 700 guests, including 300 members of the media, all accommodated in opulence with all bills paid.

Besides VIP racing personalities, there are some world notables, including Giscard d'Estaing, Iranian Khan and his wife Jamana, Bagwatch film stars and Susan George and her husband Simon McCorkindale.

Top ten earners

Table listing top ten earners in the Dubai World Cup (U.A.E.) with names like Japan, Tokyo Yushun, and prize money amounts.

The Epsom Derby (2850,000) ranks only 21st in the world pecking order, with the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (2838,220), 22nd.

world's previous richest race - the Japan Cup. Prize money alone is not what racing is all about, however, and the earnings of a world renowned stallion would make even tonight's prize seem like mere bagatelle.

Australia's Danewin would, of course, be an instant triumph, but would not make the same impact. Cigar has looked a world beater in 13 straight wins in the States and now has the chance to beat the world.

track work since. He's not a brilliant worker. He never has been, that's not his style. What is his style is that in a race he will be handy to the pace and usually strike for home just over two furlongs out. He then does enough, but no more, to keep out the opposition. He is the arch strategist, the ultimate grinder.

Catterick runners and riders with form

Table listing Catterick runners and riders with form, including names like Lady Carolina, Spencer's Revenge, and Doodie Time.

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Specialist rules out Maguire for three more weeks

Ken Oliver ADRIAN MAGUIRE'S miserable season continued in black vein when Michael Foy, specialist at the Ridgeway Hospital, Swindon, advised the jockey to wait for a further three weeks before resuming racing.

of seasons. After breaking a collar-bone at Newbury on March 1, Maguire missed out on the Cheltenham Festival, but was hoped to be fit for Aintree.

Toogood To Be True is doubtful for Saturday's Grand National. An infection in the eight-year-old's lock was discovered on Monday and a spokesman for his trainer, Tim Easterby, said: "At the moment his prospects are only 50-50."



Maguire... misses Aintree

Chepstow National Hunt card

Table listing Chepstow National Hunt card, including names like Potentia, Sister Stephanie, and Harrier's Air.

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Lingfield (All-weather Flat)

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3.50 Lima Handicap

Table listing 3.50 Lima Handicap races, including names like Victoria Team, Port Knox, and Maiden's Hope.

4.20 Salford Handicap

Table listing 4.20 Salford Handicap races, including names like Salford Handicap, Salford Handicap, and Salford Handicap.

Results

Table listing race results for Newcastle, including names like Yearat, Cocooner, and Widen.

SANDOWN

Table listing race results for Sandown, including names like Calliope Bay, Calliope Bay, and Calliope Bay.

HUNTINGDON

Table listing race results for Huntingdon, including names like Victoria Team, Port Knox, and Maiden's Hope.

Dubai field

Table listing race results for Dubai field, including names like Lively Boy, Lively Boy, and Lively Boy.

Advertisement for mobile phones, featuring a mobile phone and text like 'E 0800 0000' and 'phones'.

Advertisement for RAGELINE COMMENTARY, featuring a phone number '0930 1684' and a list of race results.

Racing's showdown in the sand, page 13
Venables keeps Fowler waiting, page 14

Thirty years on: the Pickles legacy, page 14
A touch of Magic in Los Angeles, page 15

SportsGuardian

Cricket wastes a year

Illingworth resigns half his job

David Foot

THE era of the English cricket supremacy ended yesterday when the Test and County Cricket Board released a short statement announcing that it will return to a system similar to that discarded 12 months ago.

In both instances Ray Illingworth provided the catalyst for change. When Keith Fletcher was sacked as England manager last March Illingworth asked to combine the job with that of chairman of selectors, yesterday — four days after he was re-elected unopposed as chairman for another six months — he stood down from the team management.

Illingworth will not be replaced directly. Instead England will appoint a coach this summer — expected to be David Lloyd of Lancashire or John Emburey of Northamptonshire — although it was not immediately clear what the difference between coach and manager will be.

The new set-up was verified by the TCCB's 10-man executive committee yesterday. The deliberations mean that England's teams for this summer's series against India and Pakistan, and the touring parties for next winter's programme, will be chosen by a five-man panel headed by Illingworth.

That goes back to the pre-supremo set-up; last summer only four selectors were involved, namely Illingworth, the captain Mike Atherton, Fred Titmus and David Graveney.

Illingworth's pre-emptive and seemingly embittered strike, when making it clear that he did not intend remain-

ing the manager, took some members at Lord's by surprise, at least by his timing. He had hinted at murky deeds and backstabbing, aimed, he said, specifically at himself. His anger at what he saw as Warwickshire's and Mike Smith's overt campaign against him was not concealed.

At yesterday's lengthy meeting at headquarters his name was not often mentioned. Discussion centred instead on how Test cricket here could be revived, in the broader sense, without him.

One member said: "It was a particularly open and honest meeting, with not a great difference of opinion. Now one imagines it's going to be a matter of gradual elimination, in finding the right man to become England's coach."

The counties will nominate the two selectors. Graveney and Titmus were last year's appointees and both are thought ready to stand again — even though Graveney, currently on holiday in Florida, is upset at the hamfisted way he was forced to withdraw his name last week in a contest with Illingworth for the Test chairman's job.

There will be a ballot if necessary for the new selectorial vacancies. More urgent in timescale is the appointment of a coach. The executive committee expects a firm decision by Easter, well in advance of the Ashes report into the state of English cricket. Lloyd, the favourite, is off with Lancashire to Jamaica today, and Emburey is going on a pre-season tour with Northamptonshire.

The inconclusive nature of the meeting, although perhaps inevitable, only added to the surfeit of embarrassment over recent cricketing politics and appointments.

Now the TCCB has the delicate job of approaching the counties concerned to discover whether they would be prepared to part, on a permanent basis, with their outstanding coaches. Lancashire would be said, though probably willing, to waive any commitment by Lloyd. Northamptonshire, who have just taken on Emburey for four years, might be inclined to stall; they were planning to build their future around him.

RED CARD IN ITALY, FUTURE IN ENGLAND?



Career question... for Paul Ince, whose future with Internazionale may be decided next week PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARCHI

Ince is back, perhaps for good

David Lacey on the recalled midfielder with moving again much on his mind

PAUL INCE is back in the England team and may soon be back in England. Much depends on the Italian Football Federation's view of the Internazionale player's sending-off at Udine on Sunday, and not least the fact that initially he refused to leave the pitch.

The referee Roberto Betin had already dismissed Ince once this season. On Sunday he booked him for a dive, which television replays proved to be nothing of the kind. Nevertheless Ince's protests brought

him another red card from Betin and he may be in trouble for staying on the pitch for three minutes disputing the decision.

The Italian federation is expected to decide his punishment today. He could be banned for anything from one match to the rest of the season. Either way his future with Inter Milan is in the balance.

Before last Sunday's game the odds were that, after a difficult start, Ince would stay. He has been playing well for three months, his family are

more settled, and he feels he is now accepted both by fans and fellow players.

Yesterday, however, he admitted he had been disillusioned by what happened against Udinese. "It was a disgraceful decision," he said. "It does make you think, especially when I'm in a situation where I've got to decide whether or not I want to come back next season."

"I will be speaking to Inter on Friday and maybe there will be a decision on the Wednesday or Thursday of next week. It is a pity this has happened because the Italians now seem to have taken me into their football family. The fans idolise me, they love me,

and this has helped me immensely."

Life for Ince at Inter changed when Roy Hodgson, then the English coach of the Swiss national team, took over at San Siro.

"That was the most significant thing for me," Ince explained. "Roy's got the whole team working together and this has helped my game."

Ince's England recall after a 13-month absence rounds off what, in his words, has been "a long year for me". After he appeared at the start of the riot-wrecked match in Dublin in February last year, Terry Venables dropped him for the friendly with Uruguay because he felt the player had too much on his mind. He faced assault charges — of which he was subsequently cleared — arising from the Eric Cantona kung-fu incident.

Great escape to court of the crimson king



Vincent Hanna

MAYBE I shouldn't tell you about this, but what the hell... I always fancied being in a Goldie movie.

We had an excursion last week to Old Trafford; two daughters, one boyfriend, and me. We caught the 14.00 from Euston and travelled a mile and a half. There the engine stopped. Happy football fans and tired businessmen laughed and ordered another bottle of wine. Don't worry, the conductor said, we'll get another engine to pull us to Watford, or back to Euston, or somewhere. When? we asked. Soon, he said.

An hour later there was no sign of the engine. We were fed more implausible stories, and some snapped at the conductor, who said he was retiring soon.

A man in the buffet said he'd known Duncan Edwards, and a crowd gathered as he talked of the young genius who died after Munich.

Then he made a mistake: "You youngsters don't know how great he was, he could play anywhere. I saw him score against Scotland at Wembley in 1956. He'd have been 55 now."

"No he wouldn't," said a voice from the corner, "he'd have been 58, and the Scotland game was in 1957."

"Where did you learn all that?" I asked. "30, the older daughter. I did a project on him once," she said. "But come with me. Dad, I'm on the escape committee."

cricket bat and puberty. In 1957 I saw the Busby Babes, the year they won their second title. Duncan Edwards was everyone's hero. He was, as Geoffrey Green said, "a volcano of excitement".

But for Munich he would have captained England in 1958.

Once I trekked to St Francis's church, Dudley, to see his stained-glass window by the font. Now there is to be a postage stamp in his honour, along with Bobby Moore, Billy Wright, Danny Blanchflower and Dixie Dean. Great players all.

"If you're a Red Devil you know about greatness," said Emily. "There was Duncan and Georgie. And two kings, first Denis and now Eric."

We made Manchester at 7.40 where I foolishly bet the taxi driver a fiver that he couldn't make Old Trafford in 10 minutes. He duly collected.

Into the cathedral pushed and heaved 50,000. "This is Matt Busby Way," helpfully explained the girls, on their first visit, "and over there is the Munich Clock." Keep calm, I thought, don't panic.

THEY had changed on the train and were swathed head to toe in red and black, with baseball caps and combat boots. These understated ensembles were set off by the discreet use of a 6ft x 4ft French tricolore with a picture of his mits and "Le Roi" emblazoned thereon.

Glancing nervously at the huge crowd, I remember at their mother's warnings, Rob was looking nervous — but then he's a Gillingham supporter. "Don't worry, Dad," beamed Sinead, "we are among our own kind." Then, pausing only to spit at an Arsenal supporter, she nudged up the huge South Stand.

Actually they didn't spit at anybody. They told me to put that in — for their street cred.

Within seconds they had broad Lancashire accents, screeching "Tak im out, Steve!" "It's yer chance" — we were doled out. My daughters shoved me out the door and threw my luggage after me. I was dragged panting, up a walkway, through a block of flats, Rob, Emily's boyfriend, pushed me over a fence. Hardly a glance from the Gestapo. Est your heart out Steve McQueen. A taxi called to Euston and the 16.30. Three minutes later we passed the marooned train.

"Better not wave at them," I cautioned. "Don't be silly," said Sinead, the 15-year-old, waving furiously. "They're Arsenal supporters."

I became a United fan some where between my first

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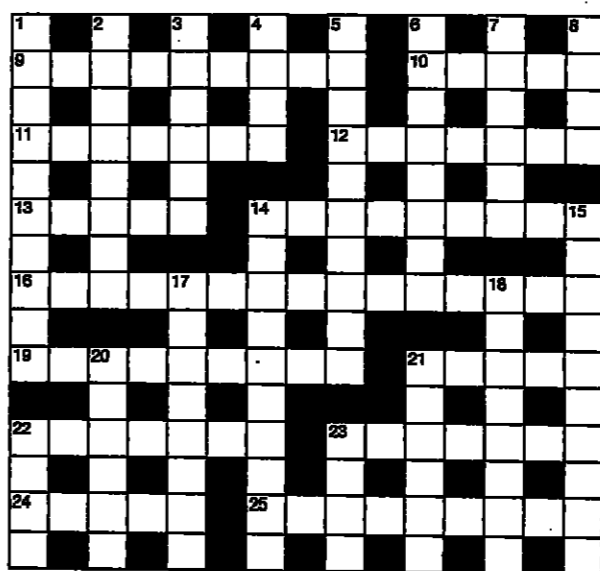
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Guardian Crossword No 20,611

Set by Araucaria



- Across**
- 9 Emperor or Pope with a group of oarsmen, about ten (9)
 - 10 Group of oarsmen, perhaps, for 14 down's month and ... (5)
 - 11 ... last in river's made its world-shaking time (3,4)
 - 12 Baker's place? Sadly he is in pawn (3-4)
 - 13 Turn out the winner deserted by god (5)
 - 14 Sanctified knowledge among food for the Buffs (4,5)
 - 16 Salutes the flag for more than passing attainment (7,8)
 - 19 Write about a lot of noise in retirement like me (9)
 - 21 Love and kiss at front of lake (2-3)
- Down**
- 1,6 Striker lets out large beast having mat up with family in picture (10,8)
 - 2 Illuminated advertisement supplying gen on sin (4,4)
 - 3 Scholar has a day without transport (5)
 - 4 A day that is infinite (4)
 - 5 Prefect affected by stripper — cool (10)
 - 6 See 1
 - 7 River for republican cook? (5)

- Solution tomorrow**
- 8 One of a scene in 21 down a big slice after 22 down (4)
 - 14 German 25 in the direction of the 1, 5, 9, 20, etc. (10)
 - 15 Team with key to missile (10)
 - 17 Raised as a baby vigorously protesting (2,2,4)
 - 18 Opening move a non-scorer: upsetting Number One is a grievous fault (6)
 - 20 Prospective half-back of Heaven has it all (6)
 - 21 Fool brought up on poetry in scene of 1, 6 (5)
 - 22, 23 Shoots area up — perform or refrain (4-4)
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